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LETTERS

ON

THE DRAMA.

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CONTENTS.

LETTER I.

On the Drama at Athens. - - PAGE 5

LETTER II.

On the Difference between a minute and delicate Taste. - - - 9

LETTER III.

Of the true Principle of Dramatic Taste. 15

LETTER IV.

Of poetical Probability. - - 19

LETTER V.

On the supposed Deception of the Drama. 27

LETTER VI.

Of the Material of Imitation. - - 29

LETTER VII.

Of the Chorus. - - - 36

LETTER VIII.

Of the Unities. - - - 46

LETTER IX.

PAGE

On Tragi-comedy. - - 53

LETTER X.

Of the French Theatre. - - 58

LETTER XI.

Of the English Stage. - - 63

LETTER XII.

Of the Battle of Eddington. - 68

LETTERS ON THE DRAMA.

LETTER I.

On the Drama at Athens.

The invention of the drama appears generally, as well as justly, attributed to Æschylus. For, though what was called Tragedy and Comedy both existed before his time, yet to him we are indebted for dialogue, which is the chief distinction of those species of composition, according to our conception, for an immoveable stage, and for that connection of music with dramatic action, which its prevalence since, in every age and country, seems to recommend. The other Greek dramatists we know of, have not improved the form of tragedy or comedy (though Sophocles and Euripides have given to the former both ornament and variety) for it still remained, in their hands, a dialogue between persons principally interested

in the action, witnessed by a group of spectators, part of whose employment was to sing. The dialogue or speeches did not preserve the same metre through the whole work, and often varied from the iambic to a verse of a more lyric form; and, on the other hand, the songs did not confine themselves to any general subject, but sometimes alluded, in an extemporaneous manner, to what was passing before the eyes of the singer. Yet still songs were represented in the choral parts by songs, and not only dialogue, or soliloquy, by songs. Whatever degree, therefore, of merit there be in this outline of a probable plan of introducing music, not improved by his immediate successors, is due to Æschylus. The same may be said of the unities; for by the use of a chorus, the unities of time and place are allowed to have been necessary, on a principle of probability. Whether, on considering the point abstractedly, he thought music would be better united with tragedy, or approved of the latitude modern dramatic writers allow themselves in exhibiting to an audience, at one time and place, actions between which days, weeks, or months must have intervened, and which must have happened remote from each other, can-

not now be known. Those who condemn the ancient plan of tragedy as represented above, suppose the poet to have been obliged, against his will, to comply with established custom; while those who think it founded on that good sense which commands our approbation, in ancient, as well as modern works, will conceive him to have gladly seen, in the use he might make of the chorus, a means of adding the treasures of other noble arts to those of simple tragic dialogue; and to have been rejoiced that the necessity of making his characters appear consistently before witnesses, suggested to him the rules of rendering probability subservient to effect. The few instances mentioned in Mr. Twining's ingenious Notes on Aristotle, of a deviation of some of the Greek dramatists from the laws of exact imitation, by no means, I confess, convince me they thought them wrong, or that they might not have trusted to the other merits of their work for its favourable reception, in spite of poetic license. With respect too to the opinion of Aristotle, stated and commented upon likewise by another respectable critic, Mr. Pye, I cannot draw the same inference from it unfavourable to the unities, nor

think he might not, while expressing it, have approved of a closer resemblance than had yet appeared, in the imitation to the object imitated. The chorus he can hardly be thought to condemn absolutely, and at the same time praise the accompaniment of music so highly; but his doubtful opinion of the unities may be supposed, on examination of their propriety, less unfavourable to them.

LETTER II.

On the Difference between a minute and delicate Taste.

THERE is a sort of disposition to attend to trifles, which argues a littleness of mind. Painting has exhibited instances of this, where an extreme finish of the parts, without much attention to proportion, or any of those animated touches which assist the general effect, constitutes the whole merit of the artist. But there are also instances of works "finished more through happiness than pains," which only denote a more enlarged comprehension, able at once to take a general and partial view of the subject, and add beauties to the rough sketch, while it preserves its complete character. It is natural, though at the same time inimical to the attainment of absolute perfection in the arts, that a nation, especially one conscious of greatness of mind, should be deceived by the resemblance between these two different qualities of a minute and delicate taste, and revolt at the idea of both of them, as one and the same.

That something of this sort is the case, in England at least, observation may perhaps convince us. But having produced literary compositions that upon the whole vie with those of any other nation whatsoever, it may less repine at the opinion of foreigners, that it has not hitherto given remarkable instances of its taste: nor may it be thought so disgraceful, that Montesquieu says, it is owing to liberty, that "its poets will more frequently have the original rudeness of invention, than that species of delicacy which is given by taste; and one will sooner find in them something approaching to the force of Michael Angelo, than to the grace of Raphael."*

But however impatient the mind may be of correctness or simplicity, little is gained by any new exertion that violates them; and it never is by this violation, but by other circumstances attending the exertion, that it succeeds. There is nothing noble in bombast or singularity, considered by themselves; nor does incorrectness seem a much more admirable quality. It is true, that Pope expresses the opinion contained in the following lines:

* Esprit des Loix, Liv. 19. ch. 27.

"If, when the rules not far enough extend
(Since rules were made but to promote their end)
Some lucky license answer to the full
The intent proposed, that license is a rule."

And it is likewise just; nor ought a rejection of beauties connected with faults to be universally recommended; but this is owing to the weakness of the mind, which has not so ready a command of beauties, as to make it prudent to run the risk of dull faultlessness, by refusing every thought that wants the stamp of perfection. This, however, ought to vary according to the degree of *talents for correction* in the writer, and also according to that of excellence in the thought; and not to countenance the establishing of a sort of rule of wrong, which is pleasing only to those who love the marvellous. Voltaire observes, in some part of his critical works, that nothing is so absurd as to sit down to write with an intention of erring against the rules of any species of writing. We may naturally err against them by the omissions of negligence or inadvertency, faults,

—— "Quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura;"

But to maintain it is more correct to be incorrect, is contradictory. A want of regularity is often reasoned upon in drawing or painting, as a mark of genius, but that it is justly in any art, may not be altogether evident. It is known that the ancient statuaries, who were perhaps the greatest and most unrivalled artists who have existed in any line, did not scruple to adhere to a system very observable in their remaining works, and which oftener exhibited the appearance of too much than of too little art: so that where there is merit, its supposed resemblance, in incorrectness, is unnecessary. The determined neglect of any approved though inferior quality also of painting, is not now customary; and though the artist's principal object be to imitate the outline of Raphael, the colouring of Titian, and the claro scuro of Corregio, he will not think it beneath him to improve himself by paying some attention to that less admirable art possessed by Lanfranc and Pietro di Cortona, of disposing his figures in a picturesque and attractive manner. The able author of the Sublime and Beautiful has the following passages:

" As many of the works of imagination are not confined to the representation of sensible objects,

nor to efforts upon the passions, but extend themselves to the manners, the characters, the actions, and designs of men, their relations, their virtues, and their vices, they come within the province of the judgment, which is improved by attention, and by the habit of reasoning. All these make a very considerable part of what are considered as the objects of taste; and Horace sends us to the schools of philosophy, and the world, for our instruction in them. Whatever certainty is to be acquired in morality and the science of life; just the same degree of certainty have we in what relates to them in works of imitation. Indeed it is for the most part in our skill in manners, and in the *observances of time and place, and of decency in general*, which is only to be learned in these schools to which Horace recommends us, that what *is called taste by way of distinction, consists.*"

The following words too, a little below, are to the same effect:—

"So far as the imagination and the passions are concerned, I believe it true, that the reason is little consulted; but where disposition, where decorum, where congruity are concerned, in short, wherever the best taste differs from the worst," &c.

From these passages the value of that taste will be judged of, which is employed in estimating those parts of a composition which do not act so immediately upon the passions, and also of that art which is their character.

LETTER III.

Of the true Principle of Dramatic Taste.

When an orator is addressing himself to an audience composed of persons of rank and education, he often rests his arguments upon political axioms, and draws inferences for their conviction, which would not easily be understood by persons whose minds were uninformed. When he wishes to acquire the favour of the people, and harangues a mixed multitude with that intent, he has less of abstract reasoning, and references to such proofs of the justice of his cause as are not familiar to all around him, and attains his end oftener by some declamatory allusion to their rights in general, or other appeal to their passions. Yet at the same time, he does not find it necessary to speak ungrammatically, or to adopt the faulty dialect or vulgar expressions used by one of the common people, though such a person might prevail more with his hearers than he would have done in speaking as he did in the senate. Upon this principle ought the dramatic writer to pro-

ceed; and the superior difficulty of pleasing the illiterate as well as the informed, helps very much to render tragic a rival to epic poetry, in dignity. Its perfection seems to be to gratify the most fastidious scholar by the closest adherence to dramatic rules, and at the same time to indulge the most ignorant frequenter of sights by whatever may strike the eye or the ear. Some people think this latter derogatory from the character of tragedy; but it is very possible to render stage effect respectable by its artful and striking use. The supposed difficulty of uniting the opinions of so many in our favour, deters us from attempting it; and yet, surely, a less time than the usually allotted space of nine years, seems amply sufficient for the undertaking.

People may err in their judgments of a dramatic work, by not sufficiently considering the two different characters it is meant to unite, of a literary performance, and of a spectacle. There is nothing extraordinary or improper, that those who only understand it as a spectacle, should condemn it upon the whole, and they are perhaps the greatest part of its judges. It is different with other literary works, which are, comparatively

speaking, all understood by their judges. Yet it does not follow that a play which is well received, must be more valuable than one which is condemned; nor, indeed, that any thing which is a beauty in another work, such as the scene of the grave-diggers in Shakspeare, and the cypress-tree mentioned by Horace, should not be valuable when separately considered.

It has been sometimes held, that an Athenian audience must have possessed extraordinary judgment in matters of taste, and much superior to an English one. Yet I cannot, for my part, think there can be much difference between audiences in the degree of their taste. If the simple arrangement of the story be thought a proof of it, I object to it for two reasons: first, that at the time of the Greek tragic writers, an audience had no experience of the charms of stage effect, as it is produced on our theatre. Secondly; there must have been a species of stage effect produced by the pomp and strangeness of the spectacle, which perhaps made it unnecessary; and instead of the probability of the *literary work*, it was perhaps the improbability, or at least the glare and pageantry, of the *spectacle*, that recommended the ancient

tragedies to the greater part of an audience, and satisfied them, without recourse being had to the variety of vicious taste.

Another mode of pleasing might have been by moral and political reflections. We know how, at our theatres, the very tone of the most sentimental morality is secure of applause from the well-meaning audience. Always allowing the first place to pathos in a tragedy, and to manners in a comedy, there seems no reason why we should reject any means consistent with correct composition, of interesting an audience. I cannot, for this reason, subscribe to the opinion of Gibbon, in his entertaining posthumous works just published, who allows no advantage to be taken of so fertile a source of pleasure as that of farce.

When Addison wrote against some of the stage tricks common in those days, he thought himself serving the cause of regular composition; but it was quite the reverse. They would have helped out the tragedy of Cato much better than his love scenes. It is equally certain that they would not have been worse.

LETTER IV.

Of poetical Probability.

THERE are various ways, more or less absurd, according to the opinions of critics, in which poets may violate the laws of probability. Of the Bard of Gray, there appear to be some who reason in the following manner.—Though Johnson resembles Rhymer in his condemnation of the great poet he criticises, he resembles him also in the justness of his remarks; and however inferior the "Prophecy of Nereus" be, upon the whole, to "the Bard," it is superior in point of probability. To imagine the god Nereus to prophecy, was a natural conception, and calculated instantly to attract the mind of those who allowed such a divinity; and though Horace should not have given credit to the possibility of it, yet, by a sympathy which daily discourse furnishes instances of, he might be supposed for a moment to adopt the tastes and opinions of those among whom he lived, and whom he wished to amuse. This was a natural operation of the mind, and nature is always

pleasing. But the author of "the Bard," not only supposed to exist what neither he nor any other living person could think possible (for he professed a far more jealous* religion than Horace); but did not, as Johnson observes, adhere accurately to the creed of those whose superstition he feigned to believe. Hence, as far as the magic of his style permits us, we express disapprobation of *the idea* of "the Bard" as more strained and far-fetched than "the Prophecy of Nereus."

When this sort of improbability is in the drama, it is one degree better; for the poet does not absolutely, in his own words, assert his belief in the fiction. So that one may imagine he meant to represent the ideas of another person. In the Phædre of Racine, where Hyppolite loses his life in consequence of the prayer of Theseus to Neptune, it will occur, that though a Pagan poet believed in the divinity and power of Neptune, a Christian could not. Yet, as Racine did not affirm any thing himself, but made his characters tell their own story, there is less improbability in this; though, in a regular drama, even this degree of remoteness from truth is too much felt. It might,

* See Gibbon, Vol. i. page 35, quarto edition.

however, be allowed in such a composition as a masque or pantomime, in which all the wonders of Harlequin might, to the literary spectator, be exhibited by a Medea, or an Armida; for, to the philosopher himself, the opinions, and even errors, of mankind, in different ages and countries, are a curious subject of contemplation.

Pope's machinery of the Sylphs and Gnomes, is, I think, the most admirable instance existing of poetical probability. It is not a mere negative merit, but has a positive effect; and there is an infinite beauty in the archness of the poet's intention. Had either everybody, or nobody believed in those familiar spirits, the fiction would have wanted spirit, and the contrast of weak faith in himself, and the "doubting wit" with the credulity of the "fair and innocent," would not have given force to the satire, or equal beauty to the composition. Owing to the inferior aptitude, at the present day, of this machinery, the use of it seems improper; though it does not seem at all contrary to probability, to imagine new spirits consistent with prevailing notions.

But it is not only the violation of historical truth that is said to transgress probability; but in

general whatever is not imagined either necessarily, or naturally, is said more or less to err against it. It is held by some (for instance), that the characters who appear at the first scene should act throughout a play, as if they remained in the same place, and be supposed to complete the action in the same time that they appear to do. Johnson, however, thinks it does not, but that a change of scene may be made, and the action continued at a time somewhat remote; arguing, that when this change is made, it is no more difficult to imagine the second place represented, than the first. But this is at least certain, that supposing us to transport ourselves in imagination to the first, it is possible for us to conceive the absurdity of any place's being, at once, the same and different, whatever force there be in this idea. It is not less improbable, that the time and place should be varied between the acts; for we, in a manner, see through the curtain, just as the ancients did through the drapery with which Timanthes, in his picture, covered the head of Agamemnon; and every thing, both what may be behind the curtain, and what appears when it is drawn up, conspires to form one connected whole. Lord Kaimes does not ad-

vert to this, where he says, " after an interval, the imagination readily adapts itself to any place that is necessary, as readily as at the commencement of the play." These unities of time and place are the only ones that have to do with probability.

The action's passing before witnesses, is thought, by those who favour the chorus, to be more probable, and, I think, in one sense, justly: however, I in general approve of the dramatic opinions of the judicious Bishop Hurd, I do not go so far as to think it indispensably, or in such a manner probable, that its not doing so could shock us as absurd; it would only have a feebler effect upon the mind, by not being marked with an additional characteristic circumstance, namely, its power of producing such and such sensations in the minds of stage spectators.

An effect of want of animation has been pointed out by Mr. Pye in the moral interference of the chorus, which is only an error against probability, and the cause being removed, the effect ceases. The remarks upon this, that " it is the horror shewn by the physician and attendant, during Lady Macbeth's dream, and the indignation of Faulconbridge at Hubert, as the supposed murderer

of Arthur, that resemble the two horses in Le Brun's picture." Now this is the very object of a chorus, to form precisely such situations as are here mentioned. A chorus ought to moralize, but not in a more improbable manner, than Faulconbridge does here, or than Henry the Sixth does at the death of Cardinal Beaufort. If it should be doubtful, whether morality be not too frequently inculcated by the fair chorus of Elfrida, yet in Caractacus, Mr. Mason has made ample amends; for every moral sentence, pronounced by a priest, contributes to his priestly dignity; and Mr. Mason's art in managing this, leaves us nothing to desire. Probability here has not only a negative effect, but also gives force to character.

I own I equally approve of the character of the Coryphæa in Elfrida, compared with that of the confidante, which the author observes he might have chosen. The chorus ought no more to be considered as a group of important characters, than the lords, gentlemen, servants, &c. of Shakspeare, whose number, however great, never shocks us. We consider them as in the back ground, and they are distinguished, as men, by no peculiar character; which, I think, I may say, is

the case of the ancient Coryphæi. Besides, if we compare the characters, with how much more probability are domestics found at the house of a great person than even a near relation? Many may be without such particular relations, but none can be unattended; besides, that a shew of dependants marks their situation in society with greater truth; add too, that the appearance of these attendants in Elfrida improves the costume, and with truer colours represents the manners of the age.

Upon the whole, I think the claim just, of at least equal probability, both in the unities and the chorus. With respect to the former, it appears from the very eloquence used to contest it. In the commentary on Aristotle it is observed, that "this rule of natural unity has nothing to do with the most striking flights of improbability. If a writer puts his hero on a magic courser, that can

"Put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes,"——

it is no offence against this rule." But were this liberty of the dramatic writer capable of being

justified as natural, it would have been so by a metaphor not representing a preternatural action.

It is remarkable, that the instances here given of violation of the rules of natural unity is taken not from those plays which have strictly adhered to the regular unities, but from the tragedy of King Lear; and it may be observed too of the chorus, that only *some* of the Greek plays have furnished instances of improbability, occasioned by its introduction: whereas, in finally condemning a species of composition, we ought at least to have it proved to us, that it never has succeeded, as we undertake to pronounce, that it never can. I am at a loss, indeed, for a reason, why, in all other works, even ideal probability should be either a beauty, or no defect; but that we should stop short of this point in the drama.

LETTER V.

On the supposed Deception of the Drama.

I OWE to my perusal of the commentary* my idea of theatrical deception. The skilful development of the plot, the effect of theatrical spectators, as exhibited in the chorus, and that perspicuity, which I shall speak more of, resulting from the unities of place and time, and owing to the equal connection of all the parts of regular tragedy, seem to produce a more vivid conception of the event passing before our eyes, mistaken, I imagine, for that belief, which it would naturally accompany. The more there is of this vivid conception so produced, and unattended by belief, the more pleasure do we derive from tragedy. I do not mean to dispute Mr. Burke's idea of our taking† pleasure in real calamity; but a stage representation is an exception to this rule. It must be said in favour of the unities, that this effect

* Pages 116, 117.

† Sublime and Beautiful.

never has been attributed to them, and, therefore, so far we may go, not only with safety, but with profit. But proceeding farther, if we write tragedy in prose, and exhibit the manners of our own times, we shall produce an effect resembling that of painted statues, and approach too near to deception to obtain our purpose. But till probability is carried to this length, it is always reasoned upon as an advantage.

Mr. Pye justly mentions the exalted personages of tragedy as one circumstance preventing this deception; from which might be inferred the use of what is called the royal tragedy, the characters of which certainly attract by importance, (a very general source of pleasure in poetry!) and which is the most calculated to avail itself of the opportunity peculiar to the drama, among literary performances, of striking the eyes. For the object of tragedy is not only to affect, but to interest, or, in other words, to affect in the most pleasing manner.

LETTER VI.

On the Material of Imitation.

FROM what I have said of the propriety of the closest imitation that does not go so far as to produce deception, will follow the propriety of our using prose in comedy, and blank verse in tragedy. In comedy, the imitation is perfect; in tragedy, it is as nearly so, as it well can be. To imitate the manners of remote ages is now impossible, and, were it not, the object would be to divert the attention from manners to actions. The pomp of blank verse (which we can better conceive the language of all ages and nations) is calculated for this distinction, at the same time that it is that verse, the liberty of which most resembles conversation. Other nations have imitated with less simplicity: the Greeks sacrificed exactness in this respect to the custom of disguising the human figure by stage dresses, and to the use of the dance during the representation. The Italians, in their operas, sing their parts; and the French, in their tragedies, and principal comedies, use rhyme.—

These customs we object to, as unnatural, according to that usual disposition in man, from which arises the wish of destroying, or altering, by a standard of abstract excellence. But in this, as in many things, practice is at war with theory, and those who are most conversant with foreign and ancient works of this sort, can best conceive, how they do not revolt, by what we think absurdity, the natives of those countries for whose amusement they were designed. We may rejoice that our literature, in this respect, like our government, is founded in reason, without desiring that other nations should suffer inconvenience by an hazardous attempt to resemble us.

Metastasio observes, that " an imitator, who does not undertake to produce the exact truth, but only to give as great a likeness as possible to the material he employs, has perfectly fulfilled his promise, and attained his end, when he has given it every thing of which his materials are capable—and that it is from ignorance of this nature of imitation, that arises the contemptuous judgment of those, who treat the musical drama as improbable and absurd, because the actors die with a song in their mouth." On this subject, however, we

might more easily agree with him, if the same relation were preserved in the materials as in the objects of imitation. For instance, did the opera not vary more in the poetry and the music, than just in proportion to the temper of mind of the speaker, and did they just in the proper degree heighten or enforce every passion, a refined taste need not be hurt at the present want of truth perceived in the relation between the different materials of imitation. In that case, what advantage there may be in music for the expression of sentiments in a more delightful manner, would go much farther towards compensating for the defects of a less natural mode of imitation. At present there are only two dissimilar vehicles for sentiment; blank verse, united with recitative, and lyric poetry, set to a much more varied music; and to these two all the passions must adapt themselves. We see here the advantage of the Greek chorus, even as it was rudely designed by Æschylus. They are not characters whose singing is merely an imitation of discourse, but who represent singers; and therefore have nothing in them, in this respect, that we can think unnatural. Discourse and song are divided in reality, and

they are therefore properly in imitation. It must be owned, there is not in the colloquial parts of the Greek drama the same uniformity that there is in discourse. Dr. Francklin, indeed, the translator of Sophocles, approves of this very fault, on the principle of variety; and Metastasio, unable to defend it by appealing to reason, appeals thus to the example of the ancients, in his letter to the Duke of Chattellux.* "You have before learnedly observed, Sir, that the primitive fathers of tragedy, in order to furnish music with opportunities for displaying its beauties, and to vary the expression, sometimes changed in the mouths of the characters the usual iambics into anapæsts and trochees; nor has it escaped you, that the personages themselves sung alone, with each other, and in dialogue, with the chorus, strophes, antistrophes, and epodes; measures which naturally require that species of music which we now apply to air; and which you, in a masterly manner, have called periodical: hence, by a necessary consequence, you will conclude, that in flattering the effeminate ears of the audience with arietti, we have doubtless illustrious ancient and great autho-

* Burney's Life of Metastasio, vol. II. p. 323.

rity, both for air and recitative." But the songs of the ancient plan of drama, are perfectly natural, supposing, in the first place, they are premeditated; and, in the second, that the leader of the band indicates the song either by beginning to sing what they are supposed to know, or by proposing it, as the Druid calls upon his brethren, in Caractacus, to chant "the prelude of the famed solemnity:" or else that some principal character should call for the song, as in the play of Esther, where she says,

"Mes filles, chantez nous quelqu'un de ces cantiques,
Où vos voix, si souvent se melant à nos pleurs,
De la triste Sion celebrent les malheurs."

This designation of a particular song is made first, I believe, by Racine. Mr. Mason has, with judgment, imitated him in this, but has himself made a real improvement in this best sort of tragedy, by effecting the true division of it into *chorus* and *iambic*, according to Milton's happy definition. The principal characters, in his plays, never quit the iambic metre; though they do, I fancy, in *every one* of the Greek tragedies, as well as Racine. We may form a judgment of the idea the

Italians have of the nature of operas, by the opinion of one* of their critics; who objects to the custom of making similies, or thoughts marked with simple fancy, the subject of airs, and says, that only the more impassioned sentiments of the piece are proper for them. However music and metre should be capable of imitating truly, by their power real or supposed, of expressing passion in its different degrees, it will be impossible to preserve a due relation between the part of the work in which blank verse is united with prose; for while the principal characters are elevated above nature, the rest will remain upon a level with it; as there is no way of varying or modifying prose. A fault is remarked, by Mr. Pye, in Thomson's Tancred and Sigismunda, where a letter is read in prose. Yet still, though by prose the material *may seem* avowed, there is a natural reason for changing the material, which must have influenced Thomson. The French poets, in this case, use sonnet metre, and Shakspeare likewise, though certainly without much deep reflection upon its fitness for tragedy, has used rhyme. But in the tragi-comedy, where the act does not

* Planelli, dell' Opera in Musica, page 83.

vary from speaking to writing, still the material varies from poetry to prose, and a false relation is produced between the parts of the work, that transgresses poetical probability. Nor is there excuse for this, if we consider the power blank verse has, by rejecting variety of pauses, as in the scene where Antony harangues the mob, of expressing the simplest notions of the meanest citizen.

LETTER VII.

Of the Chorus.

HAVING now at large considered the subject of poetical probability, I shall not dwell any longer upon it, and confine myself chiefly, or wholly to others, both in treating of the other parts of the drama, and the chorus; which I shall next speak of, as being the parent, no less than the mate, of tragedy; though I hope you will find that it is neither, like Sin in Milton, monstrous in itself, nor has formed a disadvantageous union; nor, finally, has produced an unsightly and inharmonious brood, whose existence there may be cause to regret.

Before we attempt to reason upon the propriety of a chorus, it seems necessary to define it with accuracy, and to determine precisely what we mean by it. Colman, in his notes on the Epistle "ad Pisones," observes, that if we attempt to revive the chorus, we ought, in order to do it thoroughly, to revive the dance, as well as the song. I might add, that we ought to compose in Greek; nay, celebrate

the rites of Bacchus. But this is not enjoined by the generality of those critics who have written against the chorus; I wish no more than to abide by their idea of its character, while they condemn it. Now all, or most of them, have, I believe, written since the first appearance of the Esther and Athalie of Racine, and none of them have objected to the ancientry of that style of drama, nor said, that it is not according to the manner of the Greek tragedies, with a chorus. Their silence upon the subject justifies our opinion, that they allow those plays to be, *essentially*, of that kind. But why then is the constant presence of the chorus mentioned as if insisted upon, it not being to be found in those plays? I do not say that, however difficult, a fine tragedy may not be written, with perfect propriety, and the constant presence of the chorus take place; but I think the contrast arising from its occasional absence, makes sufficient amends for its usual effect of producing a more vivid conception of what passes; or rather, produces the same effect in another way.

I shall proceed to consider those advantages of the chorus which I have not yet touched upon, and our evident acknowledgment of those very

advantages, in the construction of a modern tragedy, will easily appear.

First. With respect to its moral effect, it may be asked, what is the peculiar advantage of the chorus, if all the characters of the play ought * to make no moral remarks but what are probable? To this I answer, that the Coriphæus may be relied on for them more than any single character, (though not so much as the whole number of them,) and for this reason, he is of a rank which are the lookers on, and censors in society, and will be more employed in giving opinions of actions, than in acting themselves. The moral effect of a chorus might perhaps be produced, in comedy, most frequently by the servants of a house; and the spirit of farce, cautiously admitted, instead of seeming heterogeneous, might have a peculiar force confined to those characters. Now, both in comedy and tragedy, do not we already make a similar use of such inferior characters?

Secondly. As to its effect in improving the spectacle. Both variety and dignity are given to the group by a chorus; and this likewise the moderns obtain by the mixture of high and low cha-

* See page 23.

racters, especially in what is called royal tragedy. In speaking of this subject, the Œdipe of Voltaire naturally occurs. It is a curious attempt of one who is prejudiced against the other advantages of the chorus, to render the spectacle, by means of it, more picturesque.

Thirdly. With respect to its songs. I shall consider, first, whether they take from the effect of the drama; and, secondly, what degree of advantage they confer upon it.

If the introduction of music into tragedy do, indeed, interrupt the course of events, so as to diminish the interest, as is supposed by many, there is no doubt it ought not to be admitted. But there are some parts of a tragedy, perhaps, where it may be safely pronounced beforehand, that it cannot happen. Towards the beginning, for instance, where the attention is not yet, or is hardly awakened; or at the end, particularly after the catastrophe, where the joy or sorrow wants to be completely expressed, might not music aptly be introduced? But if I were to say, there is an English play with chorusses confined to the *intermediate* parts, which was thought to derive acknowledged advantage from them by a critic, not by any means

of the ancient school, it would surprise. And yet, if we judge rather by things than names, we shall find that the tragedy of Theodosius is such a play, and that the following is part of a critique of it, given in Baker's Biographia Dramatica. " It is also *assisted* in the representation by several entertainments of singing in the solemnity of church music, composed by the celebrated Henry Purcell, being the first he ever composed for the stage." But those who attend the theatres, need not inquire elsewhere the degree of pleasure a British audience can receive from theatrical music. I do not know whether the French could revive the chorus, but am persuaded that the English might; nor can I think that the great mediocrity of the songs in Theodosius, for instance, when compared with the chorusses of Sophocles, gives the author of the former any advantage. Athenian sublimity, and even obscurity, would, no less than even Grub-street fatuity, be put out of view, to most people, by the pleasing interruption of the accompaniment.

This justification of the introduction of chorusses, suggests a reason why we should *embody* those inferior characters, always necessary, and

form of them a regular chorus; or at least, that if we chose to separate the offices, we should have a distinct body for this purpose only.

But this custom does not only deserve justification, as not taking from the effect of tragedy, but preference, as improving it, and forming not only a different, but a better species of it. The advantages I have considered appear nothing in comparison of that which I shall now speak of; I mean the power which belongs to the chorus, of delighting by the means of music and lyric poetry. I have often wondered that critics and academicians have dwelt so little upon this quality of the chorus in tragedy, when they might have seen in Racine's Esther and Athalie that it was considered by him as the principal, and almost only material one. It is by means of this alone that it can at all rival epic poetry as a literary work. The two species of composition have been compared very justly by Mr. Pye, and their merits as justly determined, upon taking into consideration only the dramatic parts of tragedy. But let us consider the idea Aristotle had of it, as connected with the greater ode, a species of writing that hardly yields to any. Suppose that Othello or Macbeth had, naturally

introduced in them, odes such as Dryden's Alexander's feast, which alone is allowed to have merit capable of immortalizing an author; or suppose that all the odes of Gray, on which was founded his claim to a cenotaph in Westminster Abbey, which are not more than sufficient, made part of a single choral tragedy, would the work exhibit less variety of talents? Epic poetry, perhaps, may exhibit more variety of talents, but it does not talents so extremely opposite, as those fitted for dramatic dialogue, in which *words* are extremely subservient to *things*, and those adapted to the ode, in which glowing expression is almost exclusively the object: for eloquence in this art is cultivated more purely than in any; being neither confined to truth of fact, as at the bar, or in the senate; not interrupted by the attention necessary either for narration, or even elaborate disposition and arrangement; while it borrows assistance, at least as much as any, from that elevation of phrase which is peculiar to poetry. Mr. Pye says, "the epopee depends more on itself; the poet is at the same time, poet, actor, and manager." But it seems to me this is the case, or at least ought to be, no less in tragedy. The writer ought to con-

eive clearly the mode in which the actors are to eliver his sentiments, and as far as possible indiate it by a note. He ought too to make himself naster, as much as possible, of the means of triking by the scenery, and study the full effect f it; otherwise he will find it difficult to amuse he galleries, while he preserves the unities. Now his, instead of being easy, shews more opposite alents than what the epic has to do, because of the want of connection between the three talents here; whereas the epic poet, using the same verse, and mode of exhibiting his representations, is led naturally from one to the other of these employments. They are all habitual to him *as a literary man.* I do not, however, pretend to argue that of two compositions, one of which shall be an epic poem, and the other a choral tragedy, executed in the same manner, the former may not be a greater work. The latter, however, as an admirable invention, adapted to the nature of man, does not seem to yield to it. "The production of a drama," says Metastasio, "in which all the fine arts concur, is an extreme difficult enterprize." Let us consider how many of those elegant arts which are (for the most part) the pride of genius, and which there

must always be so great a demand for in a populous and civilized country, were united for the entertainment of an Athenian audience. In the dialogue was the art of exciting pity and terror; in the odes, that of pleasing by the happiest union of enthusiastic language and metre, as well as the art of music and of dancing; in the building where they sate, architecture; in the decorations of the building, sculpture; on the stage, as in the scene, painting, and the histrionic art. Dancing however, was introduced in a manner that must have taken from the faithfulness of the imitation, and to which nothing but inveterate custom could have reconciled the audience. It has never yet appeared to have been the subject of contemplation, whether a more probable kind of dance, that would accord with the manners of the time and place where the event happened, might not be cautiously introduced, by favour of that obscurity in remote history, which as Gray justly observes, "gives an unbounded liberty to pure imagination and fiction."* Perhaps this art may be dispensed with in tragedy; but how friendly is the obscurity here mentioned to the probable in-

* Memoirs, Section 4th. Letter 27th.

oduction of a band of singers; and how much ore now than in the time of the Greeks, whose vn annals were so simple, and who had not such choice of stories, just sufficiently dark for the et, in the annals of other countries! Voltaire, th a mind far more harmonized by the arts than anarchical scholars, was however too fastidious his ideas of propriety, in what regarded his ourite, tragedy, to allow of this beautiful as-nblage of sister arts. He disapproves, as was served, of the use of a chorus, and he consi-rs that degree of ornament, which was seen in ancient theatre, as vain and ostentatious. Yet ether sculpture, if admissible, would be worse culated than painting to please by candlelight, l be determined by those who, like us, have n the Apollo de Belvidere with torches.

LETTER VIII.

Of the Unities.

THE Unities of place and time, are the onl ones that are peculiar to the drama, and have di vided critics into two parties, those who condemn and who approve of them. How far they ar necessary to the drama on the score of probabilit I have considered in a former letter, and I no therefore shall consider them in other respects.

Instead of examining whether the unities o time and place are necessary, we ought first t inquire what reason there is to violate them. poet, we will say, begins a tragedy, and writes th first act without having introduced any change place, or prolonged the time: arrived at that poin he finds it convenient to do so, and according his reasons, I approve or condemn him. If h say, either that he is obliged before a certain da to furnish a piece for the theatre, or that he ha such natural impatience and want of talents fo correct composition, that he cannot write by rul without spoiling the work he has undertaken, th

tmost poetical license ought to be allowed him, nd he ought to be completely indifferent to the avils of French dogmatism. But if he wish to epresent all farther attempts at perfection as use- ess, and complain that without extending the me, he cannot combine into one piece two vents related in history; I would ask him, why e does not look into *the annals of imagination*, nd find there every possible situation that may erve his purpose? If he be not either one of the w, whom skill or patience enables to search those olumes, let him not rashly question the existence f what they contain. Suppose one writing bad oetry were to say gravely, in excuse for it, that it as too difficult to produce expressive and har- onious language; would it be thought sufficient?

It will not, surely, be held that the time, which lapses in a play, over and above that of the re- resentation, and when the characters are off the age, can excite the passions by the force of ere duration.

Eternity is certainly a sublime idea, but no ortion of time, however extended, affects us in e same manner, nor has it ever entered into the ead of a dramatic poet to rival Shakspeare, by

representing in his tragedy a series of events, which should reach down from the creation to the present time. Thus neither are these unities always adverse to providing subject matter for a work, nor do they of themselves deduct any thing from the force and effect of it; on the contrary, would not these breaks very improperly intrude in the middle of an impassioned scene? or, at least, would the interruption they cause, very much increase the interest? Gravina,* a critic of cautious taste, and one who adhered very closely to Aristotle, thought, however, four-and-twenty hours preferable to a shorter time, for the duration of the fable; because, he says, a great event must necessarily take up so much time. But when the pleasure, arising from reflection on a story, is substituted for the emotion produced by a succession of interesting actions, tragedy may attract; but it is on the principle of the epopee; for though the fable be valuable for its importance, its power of acting upon the passions ought to be its principal merit. That such was the character of tragedy, was conceived by its great inventor, who considered his poems as

* Della Tragedia, cap. 6.

" single dishes taken from the great feast of Homer." Aristotle does not expressly, indeed, say that the time of the representation is the best for the duration of the fable, and he even makes a distinction between them; but I do not collect from what he says of a fable's being better as it is larger, provided it be perspicuous, he means any degree of perspicuity should be sacrificed for its extension; and extreme perspicuity is only to be had by a strict adherence to the unities of time and place. Where they are, observed there is a perpetual key to the story; the mind no longer having occasion to enter into itself to develope any part of it. Thus if perspicuity be a quality of the least value in composition, these unities are not, as Johnson represents them, superfluous, or rather a blemish, such as would be "the introduction of all the orders into a citadel, when the principal beauty of a citadel is to exclude the enemy:" a simile illustrating *simplicity* by an example of its opposite, *ornament*. Though not indispensable for pleasing, they are in themselves calculated to add to pleasure; not to mention in their praise the exclusive privilege they give the drama, of being regulated by precise invariable

rules, drawn from the nature of things. To wish a mind like Metastasio's, should be under that restraint, in composition, he held to be attached to the observation of the unities, would be pedantic; to condemn Shakspeare on account of his transgression of them, would be no less so: but ought therefore the advantages of regularity to be undervalued? or does it not rather seem peculiarly characteristic of a polished age? As to change of scene, it only pleases because it is variety; and if variety be produced by other means, it is useless. Yet it is certain that as lights and shades in any place may vary during the course of hours, any place may exhibit, during that time, a different appearance; and accordingly, I have heard an artist in the line of landscape-painting say, he thought an effect adequate to change of place might be obtained by merely exhibiting the same objects, at different times of the day. Still greater would be the difference of day and night, or some accidental change in *the scene*, without changing *the place*, as in the Athalie of Racine. But it is not the unlettered part of an audience (which judges as well as its degree of information permits) nor yet those learned critics, who cautiously

dissent from him, that the regular writer finds so very difficult to content: it is only those admirers of system, who in prologues, newspapers, &c. zealously write down any attempt to please, according to a different model from that which they have determined is best; who, finding the drama either allows or requires a freer measure, do not scruple to reckon harmony a fault; and who want no other reason to condemn a piece than its adhering, more strictly than usual, to the laws of good sense, and, of course, departing from what they mistake for English energy. Lettered critics are of two sorts, one of which may be said to judge *according* to rule, and the other *by* rule. The first when they form their judgment of a work, have already qualified their minds for the task by knowledge of the rule, but now dismiss all thoughts of it, and are influenced solely by feeling; the latter, being destitute of feeling, have nothing to direct them but the rule, from which they cannot depart. Their inability of doing justice to merit discourages it improperly, even when it acknowledges error, but still more when it professes to exhibit a nearer approach to perfection.

Upon the whole, it is to be wished that poets

would adopt that form of composition, which they feel gives them liberty to write in the happiest mood. But still one form may be better than another, and it may possibly happen, in process of time, that dramatic effect may be so well understood, that we shall wonder at the necessity now supposed, of transgressing rules.

Unity of action has, I believe, been allowed by most critics to be founded in reason. There is not the same difference of opinion in respect to this, as to the unities of time and place, between the English critics on the one hand, and those of all former times, and almost all foreign countries on the other. That a fable should be one, and the events, though happening at different times, and different places, should be equally connected with each other, and subordinate only to one principal one, is by no means an unfashionable opinion, especially among enlightened critics. Aristotle may be easily supposed to entertain it, and he has considered the subject in that part of his poetics, where he compares a just fable to an animal, neither too large to be taken in by the eye at one view, nor too small to attract the attention.

LETTER IX.

On Tragi-comedy.

THE new commentary on Aristotle, has some very just criticism upon tragi-comedy. Mr. Pye disapproves not only of the regular tragi-comedy, as being contrary to the rule I last mentioned, by its double plot, but condemns the union of comic and tragic scenes, even in a single plot. The monthly Reviewers seem not to notice the distinction made by him between the tragi-comic plays of Shakspeare, and those of Dryden and Otway, and, as far as I understand them, approve of both species; Mr. Pye's opinion of this matter seems, in both instances, founded on the same principle; for even in the case of a single plot, unity of action, especially in compositions not more extended than a drama, appears impracticable without unity of character; and when the action becomes comic, it is no longer the same. If indeed the comic parts are decidedly subordinate, as in some Greek tragedies, and Homer's Iliad, it offends much less. A nobleman, whose elegant

pen confers literary consequence on those fine arts, which are not literary, and lends a charm to the dry study of the antiquary, has also successfully attempted a work of fiction, in the Castle of Otranto; but the rule recommended by precept in the preface, and by example in the tale, may not universally seem proper. It may be thought perhaps that in the scene of the grave diggers, a fault has been committed; but one of Shakspeare's faults, and, as usual, more valuable than the careful composition of another author: that a distinction may be made between that and the scene where Antony and Brutus harangue the mob, whose language *is* surely "vested in heroics," and errs little against rule; and that whatever the merit of the former scene, *when considered by itself*, it acts more forcibly, and to a worse effect on the *whole* composition, than the comic parts of the Castle of Otranto; first, because it is more comic, and more extended, and, secondly, because the march of the drama is more rapid, and prevents its glancing, like the epopee, at objects not pressing upon its attention; though such interlocutors as are here recommended may, in this original example, have produced a good effect,

as well as in any later work, in imitation of it; yet one may possibly foresee that their blunders cannot furnish inexhaustible means of giving dignity to a work, nor tend very powerfully to enliven it.

Tragi-comedy has been sometimes of late defended as being a more natural picture of human life; in which happiness and misfortune appear alternately. But tragedy and comedy likewise aspire to the praise of being pictures of human life: how therefore shall we determine their comparative claims? I think in the following manner: comedy is a picture of human life as it is every day: tragedy is so during those great events which operate powerfully upon our conduct: but tragi-comedy shews the general rule observed in the former, unnaturally jumbled, with the exception instanced in the latter. It is said, that the exception proves the rule; but that is, when they are argued upon as of opposite natures, and not as of the same nature. In tragedy the passions shine immediately and forcibly; in comedy, by giving lustre to the manners; but in tragi-comedy, where the direct influence of the passions is looked for, and yet the manners appear, the con-

sequence is unavoidable, that their effect must be weakened, and their splendour be obscured.

It is true, I confess, that what is most material to please an audience, is that which is exhibited at a single point of time; so that were there a succession of stage tricks and buffooneries, through a piece, with but a decent degree of connection between them, it would content them; and upon this principle tragi-comedy finds favour. Two questions will arise naturally from this.

First, if single, momentary actions are what chiefly please, why is not tragi-comedy as eligible a species of the drama as any other?

Secondly, for the same reason, why need we require, with the author of the Pratique du Theatre, any bounds to a tragedy, or say precisely, how many hundred lines* it ought to consist of?

To the first question I answer, that the general interest of the piece is always an addition, and use may be made of this very disposition to variety. If, instead of a comic scene, songs are

* A French tragedy it too long for an English audience; for whom Æschylus's plays are of a better length than those of Sophocles and Euripides.

troduced, the same tone of mind is preserved, increase the interest, and that variety no less btained.

To the second I answer, that though an audience oes not fatigue its attention by listening to every ord in a play, yet even stage tricks, exhibited y the same persons long, will want variety.

LETTER X.

Of the French Theatre.

ITALY has undoubtedly the honour of reviving the regular tragedy in as perfect a manner, with respect to its mere form, as it appeared at Athens. And this would be an honour worthy of most countries, but is not of one that boasts such superior merit; Italy is a country, that in spite of the doctrine of the rights of man, and the new philosophy, has perpetually abounded with genius, and, what is extraordinary, still more under monks, than under senators. In some line or other, we everywhere see conspicuous characters rising round us, and are tempted to cry out with the wondering Sybil, "quo fessum rapitis, Fabii?"

The opinion Lopez de Vega had of the taste of Spain, which he was obliged to comply with, is known from himself. He tells us in a poem, that he is obliged to neglect Sophocles, Euripides, and Terence, in order to please bad judges, who ought justly to have, for their money,

hat they prefer. But the drama was soon after-
rds cultivated by the French, and an union of
nius, with a remarkable sense of propriety, is
scernible in their theatre. To them we owe
e rule, that a drama ought, in strictness, to be
nfined to the time of representation; nor have
few of those rules, which sensibility of taste
ust approve, been traced by their critics. France
certainly one of the few countries that have ga-
ered laurels in almost every part of literature,
d though the children of Europe are ill trusted
ith the edge-tools of philosophy, yet, when di-
cted properly, their efforts have been marked
y a sensible increase in the genuine produce of
ramatic labour. On the other hand; however
st their rules, they have rated them too high, in
aking them the principal test of the merit of
erformances; and Dr. Johnson, though wrongly
I conceive, arguing against them, yet does it in
pport of a good cause, by his defence of Shak-
peare. Mrs. Montague had the merit, during the
ontroversy between her and Voltaire, of observ-
ng the due medium; and while she did justice to
orrect composition, shewing as commendable a
andour to the errors of genius. Dr. Warton

considers the usual rules of the drama in the same point of view, to judge from parts of his Essay on the Genius of Pope. His critique on Addison's Cato, remarks the fault of its unnecessarily exceeding the time of the representation. Without condemning French correctness, he observes, in allusion to the frequent boast of it by its advocates, "if it means, that, because their tragedians have avoided the irregularities of Shakspeare, and have observed a juster economy in their fables, therefore the Athalie, for instance, is preferable to Lear, the notion is groundless and absurd." An Englishman will not be slow to allow the superiority of Lear over Athalie, as a work of wit, and upon the whole; but in the single quality of taste, the other must be confessed to excel most dramas. It is not merely "an absence of petty faults," but an assemblage of great excellencies that pleases us in it; and it possesses in no small degree that spirited correctness, which peculiarly respects the feelings, not of the pedant, but the true scholar.

The faults of the French theatre, which are most noticed by us, and are common to them and the Greek tragedians, are an adoption of the de-

matory and narrative style. It is a style calcu-
ed in itself to shew great poetical powers, and
ordingly in both the nations that have used it,
have to regret that such beauties are marked
h any impropriety. It is, however, certain,
t with respect to declamation, what we want
facts, not reasons; and that with respect to
rration, what we require is actions, and not
ries. But as to the peculiarity of the father
the French stage, namely his political style,
nsidered separately from his declamatory; I
an to give my reasons why I do not think it a
nsurable peculiarity.

The ingenious critic last mentioned proceeds,
cording to the same way of thinking, to observe,
"the rules of the drama, for instance, were never
more completely understood than at present; yet
what uninteresting, though faultless, tragedies,
have we lately seen!" He then accounts for this
fact, by supposing the systematic spirit so much
in vogue, by consulting only reason, has destroy-
ed sentiment. But it seems to me that the ex-
treme irregularity which has been often exhibited
on the stage, since that part of the essay was
written, may sufficiently prove that it is not always

too much regard to reason that prevents exc
lence: it seems only to be accounted for by t
rarity of a true turn for art in the artist, eith
alone, or accompanied by genius, and which
absolutely necessary to excel in any degre
Where this is wanting, we shall in vain advi
authors either to observe, or reject rules. T
advise their rejection seems the least proper; fo
as there are some whose minds, after a me
sketch, grow tired of the work which has be
employing them, so there may be others wh
are so animated by the idea of absolute perfec
tion, that they never retouch without effect: bu
that candour which approves of faultlessness
surely preferable to that which is kind to error.

LETTER XI.

Of the English Stage.

Our school of dramatic painting appears, after king these reflections, not upon the whole to ld to any other, in spite of the superiority al- ved, in some respects, to the cabinets of other untries. The sketches of our Salvator Rosa e in so high a style, that the more faithful imita- n, the dramatic colouring of the French, has vain been relied upon to discredit them. The lt of the French critics in their strictures upon akspeare, is like that of a connoisseur, who ould condemn every drawing that was not co- ured, and praise every one that was: but that the English critics resembles the absurdity of e who should maintain, that grass and foliage re of the colour of Indian ink, and that this s capable of exhibiting all the varieties of na- re. Dramatic painting too, like dramatic poetry, quires an extraordinary effort at preserving ex- tness of imitation; for a sketch is not out of ace hung up in a room; but upon the stage, we

require that the scene should exhibit the mo
faithful copy of nature. On the other hand
the example of Corneille, followed by other poet
has introduced in France a good taste, as far a
respects the observance of the unities; yet thi
acquiescing spirit in the audiences of Paris, ha
not preserved its due limits, but has unavoidabl
given encouragement to the peculiar faults of th
French dramatists. Our audiences, on the con
trary, indifferent as they are to the literary meri
of a piece, and looking chiefly for the amusemen
of stage business and bustle, according to th
manner which Shakspeare's example has estab
lished in England; yet by this liberty of thinkin
have essentially benefited the drama; of which
nothing can be a greater proof than that our rival
so proud of their dramatic writers of the age o
Louis the Fourteenth, have not scrupled to copy
us in speaking, in their tragedies, more to th
eyes, and in rendering them less declamatory.
Voltaire did this; for when he began to write
English literature was, by degrees, becoming
known in France, and while he was in England
he had an opportunity of closely examining our
drama; which, though he had too mean an opinion

of, he with great judgment, took hints from, for the improvement of that of his own country. Whence then was this improvement ultimately derived? From the undissembled wants of a British audience—IT WAS OWING TO A BRITISH GALLERY.

Let us not therefore join in the usual outcry against the taste of the uninformed part of our audience. To their openness we are indebted for much knowledge of dramatic effect. It is an hopeless task often to give satisfaction to cold criticism, but the poet may much easier accommodate himself to the taste of unaffected and unbiassed ignorance. This more natural style of dramatic representation is therefore the contribution of our theatre to the art. We have also, as well as the French, produced two works of that sort in Mr. Mason's two poems, which I hold to be the most perfect sort of tragedy. An ingenious political writer* compares the adherence to dramatic rule with the metaphysical spirit which has raged in France of late years; but surely the most bloodless experiment has the advantage, and,

* Sir Brook Boothby's pamphlet.

though it may appear like regulating ourselves by abstract fitness, it must still be allowed that it is also *building upon old foundations*. In spite of the wonderful effort of the Greeks, in the invention of the drama, we have advanced in dramatic knowledge since their time, and it becomes us particularly to make use of it, for the production of new and more perfect works in this line. The strange imagination of French critics, that because our tragedies wanted regularity, we had less a theatre than they had, no longer obtains respect. But though our dramatic school of design in no wise yields to theirs, yet the art of dramatic colouring is not perfectly established among us; and it is always esteemed an act of patriotism, and deserving commendation, to introduce any art into a country. Accordingly, I have long wished that writers would attempt to supply this defect in our literature, till we should at length be possessed of a competent number of *acting* tragedies, not erring against those beautiful rules, the violation of which has subjected our theatre to criticism. This appears to me the great desideratum of English literature.

There has yet remained till now one defect in the chorus, which is, that the songs are often extemporaneous, and therefore less natural; and upon the whole, in estimating the progress, which is owing to us, in the dramatic art, we may come to this conclusion; that our experience has shewn stage-effect to be chiefly necessary to it, and we have drawn the inference, that *incorrectness* is supportable; but we have not drawn that equally just one, that *correctness* is so likewise.

LETTER XII.

Of the Battle of Eddington.

With the idea of English tragedy, I have described in my last letter, I was induced to attempt the subject of the Battle of Eddington. Hume had lamented, that this pattern of kings who was engaged in it, had lived in so dark an age that history was not able to do justice to his merits. It, in consequence, occurred to me as incumbent upon Englishmen to remedy as much as possible, this defect, and make poetical description, which is in our power, a substitute for historical, which is not. I wished to see English dramatic writers vie with each other in representing this great man in every part of his life: according to these ideas therefore of tragedy in general, and of this subject in particular, I published the first edition of my play, but with too much impatience, and the more as at that time, in the year 1792, the subject of the English constitution engaged, in an unusual manner, the thoughts of the public. Nothing could have been more unfavourably received: the

monthly Reviewers observed, that "the subject, we are told, is mentioned by Milton; but in this author's hands it has not succeeded, and it is as unfit for the closet as the stage." This is, as far as I can recollect, their criticism. I will just here remark upon the general opinion, which seems to have regulated this criticism, of the exclusive aptitude for the closet of a regular play: the contrary has always seemed to me the case; but you will judge from this description of my feelings. When I go to see a regular play, the entrance of every character is already prepared by what precedes in the play; and I am never at a loss; but when a variation of the supposed time takes place, I am immediately puzzled, and am ignorant of the poet's new *hypothesis*, till I develope it by close attention. But when I read the same play, I find that information I wanted, however concisely expressed, at the head of every scene. A regular play, therefore, seems to have an equal advantage on the stage and in the closet; but an irregular play loses an advantage when represented.

I carried it to Covent Garden, saying that I would alter it for representation; but it was so evidently unfit to bring on, that it was returned to

me with a refusal, though the leaves had not been cut. It was also declined at Drury-lane. As I was zealous in the cause of regular tragedy, I had to choose whether I would alter a tragedy, the subject of which was so popular, or begin another, encountering greater labour, and running the risk of being less supported by the subject. I chose the former; and undertook those alterations, which were undoubtedly very necessary; but I did not see absolute reason to despair of their success, and hoped that, coming after such eminent writers, whose plays are not often acted, I might at least succeed, in the manner of that person who sent the notice to Hanover of Queen Anne's death, and valued himself upon doing what the great Mr. Addison was unable to do.

Mr. Mason did not mean to write for the stage, and had he done so, could not have written at that time with so much knowledge of the difficulty of pleasing, within the rules, as he could now, after the subsequent long experience of the necessity of studied stage-effect. If therefore his plays are not acted so frequently as their merit deserves, it cannot furnish an argument against this species of writing. From Mr. Mason's criti-

cism on Gray's Agrippina, and still more from his conversation with him, I know he would now use a very different method in writing for the stage.

Count Alfieri has of late years, with spirit, and with patriotism, avoided the servility of forming himself exclusively upon the style of either the French or English theatre, and aimed at excellence by uniting the broken impassioned utterance of the one, with the artificial arrangement of the other. The only thing to be regretted in the form of his tragedies, is the absence of the chorus; for what a superior advantage would it derive from Italian singing! It was about this time that I met with his tragedies, and fortunately with a criticism included in the work by Ranieri di Calbigi, from which I derived, I think, more useful information on the subject of dramatic effect, which I was now studying, than from any thing. This amusing treatise is at least marked with originality: its aim is to found a system of dramatic criticism upon that single precept of Horace, "ut pictura poesis erit." Its merit, however, is all his own, and none owing to Horace. Living in the country which contains the finest productions of ancient and modern art, it was natural

that he should consider tragedy with the eye of a painter; and instead of speaking contemptuously, as the French critics have done, of that part of the drama which addresses itself to the sight, he considers it as the principal. He divides a tragedy of his friend's into what he calls a series of pictures, and points out every impassioned group, as if he were descanting upon the works of an historical painter: this is the principal part of stage-effect; nor can we, I think, condemn it, without passing a similar sentence upon the art of Raphael.

I observed, not long afterwards, the effect of Mr. Murphy's regular play of the Rival Sisters, which though it exhibited the same scene through five acts, occasioned only a faint hiss at the beginning of the last, as if prejudice forced it unwillingly from a small part of the house. I frequently also saw a very slight change in the scenery, a continuation of blank verse, and of the serious style, through other plays, sufficiently content an audience: from which I concluded, that such outrageous violation of rule as is often practised is by no means necessary to please generally.

Mr. Pye's idea of the division of the drama into three acts, and his play so written, called the Siege of Meaux, pleased me, as I had already formed the same opinion, in reading Aristotle's Poetics, though I had accidentally ended my five acts with the five songs, thinking I might connect them with the music between the acts. I was induced by it, and also by a casual inspection of Elfrida and Caractacus as altered for the stage, to divide my play into three acts; as the irregular manner in which the songs appeared scattered over those plays, suggested to me the possibility of producing effect by the sudden, or varied introduction of music. I recollected also, that had Mr. Murphy's play before mentioned, been divided into three acts, it would have escaped the hiss.

In the course of the year 1792, Mr. Mason did me the favour of calling, and dining with me at Stoke. I mentioned to him the subject of Count Alfieri's tragedies; and he seemed to think, that if the same method were used, of omitting the chorus, there was more hope of the success of regular tragedy. It gave me pleasure, not long after, to have occasion to be of a different opinion; for going at that time frequently to the theatre, I

could not but observe the taste of the audience for what are called choruses; and it immediately occurred that they might be easily grafted upon a tragedy of the ancient form, and that then an audience might suffer, indeed, the unities, but they would actually *admire* the chorus.

In observing the ingenious machinery exhibited in some pantomimes, and the great effect of gesture and emphasis; I grew almost to think, that a play as simple as the Samson Agonistes, if it failed, might owe its ill success either to the actors or the manager. But I was particularly struck with the effect of apt allusions in the language, and of moral and political remarks. Diderot and others, indeed, have condemned this source of dramatic pleasure, according to the usual affectation in French critics, of contempt for stage-effect; the want of which is so perceivable in their tragedies. I made use of this remark in many ways, but think I have most reason to value myself upon one in particular.

Though there are many who agree with me in approving of regular choral tragedies, yet I believe it is an universal opinion, that Corneille, in first introducing political scenes into the drama, was

ot the inventor of any thing valuable, but justly ncurred the blame of writing what was out of lace, and that it might be said of such scenes, nunc non erat his opus." My desire that jus-ce should be done to so great a poet, increased he satisfaction I felt at making what I thought a urious discovery. My inference then, from the emark was as follows. I asked myself this ques-on: if a number of scattered political remarks ave the power each of them separately of gra-fying an audience, why may they not all com-ine into a single scene, like those of Corneille? Might not the striking reflections of that author nd of Lucan, please generally, if assisted by this ointed delivery of sentiments; and are not sen-iments of this cast peculiarly fit to inculcate mo-al lessons, the best object of works of fiction? I therefore approved of the moderate use of this tyle of dramatic writing; and having adopted in one scene, without much idea of its being possible o defend it, I now altered that scene in the manner which it appeared might suit the taste of an audience; nor was any received with more ap-plause, though it represented a serious debate

upon the principles of liberty, and the British constitution.

Was it a composition of another sort, and not a play I was to publish, I should have waited to improve the language in many instances; but the great object was dramatic effect, and if this is allowed to be united with so much regularity, the labour, surely, may be deemed sufficient.

I venture to suppose you are of opinion, that the applause received was earned, as far as it could be, by pains taken to render a piece acceptable. Yet when it had been altered, it was a second time pronounced, at Covent Garden, unfit for representation. I next thought of taking, in the usual manner, the summer theatre for one night: but having applied, I found that a resolution had been lately entered into, owing to a disturbance on a similar occasion, of not permitting any piece to be acted there for the first time. This appeared to me a sad discouragement of the drama: I had found that it was the custom in country theatres, to act no plays but what had been performed in London; and this resolution at once made poets completely dependant upon

e taste of managers, and prevented their being le to command an audience, circumstanced like ose at regular theatres. Before this, provided ere were no objectionable sentiments in a piece, e author could himself try the effect of it before ch an audience; but afterwards it was impos-ble; and as a drama seems imperfect and un-fit to be printed till it has been acted, there is, in truth, to him, no liberty of the press. If a remedy were sought for this, there may be enough at the present time to suggest that of destroying the mo-nopoly; but let us consider if in this, as well as other things, sensible change is always necessary to improvement. Suppose that an author, on making a compensation to managers for the thin-ness of their houses, according to an average a-greed upon, could always hire and open a theatre, for one, two, or three nights, or till they allowed the play had had a full and fair trial. This could not be said to affect private property; and if a drama was condemned, it would, like other literary works, be condemned by the public at large, and not by a few people whose judgments are as fallible as those of other men. Being determined, if pos-ble, to have mine fairly before the public, at

a London theatre, I found no other ready means except by applying to Captain Wathen, the owner of the Richmond theatre; thinking that perhaps he might be willing to dispense with any prevailing custom, of refusing to permit plays to be first acted there. He very politely and readily gave his consent; and my point was consequently gained of removing the objection to my play at the Haymarket theatre.

When it was bringing on at Richmond, however, I had before promised myself success from the chorus; I now dreaded so strong a resemblance of the ancient manner, and I did not venture to bring on any musician except an harper and a singer, who were not accompanied by the orchestra. I found, however, fortunately, that the play gave general satisfaction, though the music displeased; and from this very reason, according to my former opinion, that it was different from the usual style. And when it was afterwards acted in town, the satisfaction given (as the music was encored,) justified my intention both of hazarding it upon the theatre, and doing so in that very way I had originally wished.

The monthly Reviewers, who had condemned

play to *line trunks*, as fit neither for the stage the closet, may possibly be surprised that, instead of altering it gradually to their taste, and at obtaining perhaps their approbation of it, as *rable for a classical play*, I should, before second edition, have appealed to, and experienced favour from, a *London gallery*. They will learn that a classical play, though formed upon rules stricter than those of Aristotle's (where the time of the action only equals that of the representation,) *may* be so calculated to give satisfaction, that a critic cannot reckon every author sure of condemnation, who preserves the unities; but that, without more caution, the harm may be superior to the good they do, by leading readers into error, whose taste they undertake to guide.

You will have observed, that I change the scene partially, without changing the place, after the example I have alluded to. You may also take notice of my adoption of the French method of numbering the scenes, and of indicating at the beginning of each the persons present. The former may have its use, in a critical reference to any particular scenes; and the latter, besides

its use, is, I think in print, beautifully charac
teristic of the drama, when the names are printed i
capitals. Its use is, that the eye may immediate
glance to the page containing the names, and a
much as possible, render our conception of a pla
read, as lively as that of a play acted. For th
same reason, I thought every marginal explana
tion necessary, and have adhered to the Englis
custom of particularizing the exits and entrance

The mode of numbering the lines, as in th
Greek tragedies, might be useful, where copiou
notes are subjoined to a standard author; for i
furnishes a more precise reference: but otherwis
the page may be sufficient.

THE END.

ERRATA.

BATTLE OF EDDINGTON.

Page 28, last line, for *Edm.* read *Editha.*

—— 33, line 4, for *these*, read *those.*

—— 38, — 1, for *could*, read *couldst.*

—— 74, — 6, for *serpentining*, read *serpentizing.*

—— 104, — 1, for *hear*, read *heard.*

ERRATA.

LETTERS ON THE DRAMA.

Table of Contents, Letter XI. for *Of the English Stage*, read *Of the English Theatre.*

Page 12, line 17, for *claro scuro*, read *chiaroscuro.*

—— 23, — 22, for *The remarks*, read *He remarks*, &c.

—— 63, — 2, for *Of the English Stage*, read *Of the English Theatre.*

—— 71, — 1, dele *his.*

THE

BATTLE OF EDDINGTON;

OR,

BRITISH LIBERTY.

THE

BATTLE OF EDDINGTON;

OR,

BRITISH LIBERTY.

A

TRAGEDY.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR ELMSLY, STRAND; FAULDER, BOND-STREET; SEWELL, CORNHILL; AND OWEN AND WHITE, PICCADILLY.

1796.

THE

BATTLE OF EDDINGTON;

OR,

BRITISH LIBERTY.

A

TRAGEDY.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT.

SIR,

I VENTURED to dedicate to you the first edition of the *Battle of Eddington*, recommended only by the sincerity of my respect for you, as the champion of law and order. I less scruple to dedicate to you a second altered edition, which derives some real value from the applause of a British audience: for you have not ceased, ever since, to deserve equally the gratitude and admiration of all, by maintaining the unequal contest with your adversaries, though not, on your part, rendered even partially invulnerable by any sprinkling of execrable popularity.

Posterity, Sir, will do you the justice to remark, that had danger, at the present

period, been apprehended from the crown, the country would have found, in history, consoling proofs of its ability to cope with monarchs; but that as it was to be looked for in the metaphysical spirit growing among the people, it stood in a new and alarming predicament, and imposed on you a task of the most arduous kind. They will take notice, that the same nation, in the last and present centuries, has forced the rest of Europe to unite for the preservation of its independence, and that it has at both periods manifested an equal contempt of the balance of power. If I speak as one prejudiced, beyond others, against its politics, the reason must be sought in my situation. It may not be deemed wonderful that the grandson, and representative, in the elder branch, of the founder of Pennsilvania, should think that a secondary mode of law-giving, which supposes necessary the destruction of antecedent systems of government.

DEDICATION.

It has been, of late, a matter of literary
scussion, who is, or is not, the proper
bject of a dedication. I do not know
hether a minister has been specifically
llowed such, in case the dedicator prefers
eceiving no future benefit at his hands.
If he is, I shall be happy that, in the pre-
nt instance, a tribute has been offered,
ot unworthy of him.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient

And most humble Servant,

JOHN PENN.

pring-Gardens,
April 6, 1796.

——What the lofty grave tragedians taught,
In CHORUS or IAMBIC; teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight received
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,
High actions and high passions best describing.

PARADISE REGAIN'D.

ARGUMENT.

IRELAND was very early, by the successful exertions of St. Patrick, converted to Christianity; the early progress of which also in England, had perhaps tended to create an intercourse of the most friendly sort, between the countries; for venerable Bede informs us, that, towards the end of the seventh century, Egfrid, king of Northumberland, wantonly invaded Ireland, "an harmless nation," he says, "and always particularly friendly to the English." In the year 853, the Danes established themselves by force in that country, and in the course of their wars with the inhabitants, were gradually converted to Christianity, without becoming less hostile. At the accession of Alfred, in 871, they had nearly possessed themselves of this island. He succeeded his brother in the twenty-second year of his age, having married the sister of Buthred, tributary king of Mercia, the beautiful and accomplished Elsitha, who supported with him the various hardships he was for some years destined to endure; and his eldest

son was named Edmund, who inherited some of his father's talents, but died before him. In their retreat among the marshes at Athelney in Somersetshire, (which has occasioned a comparison between his situation and that of Marius) Alfred witnessed the daily progress of the Danes, who obliged Buthred to fly to Rome, and who found in Ceoluph, called in the Saxon Chronicle "a certain thane," and one of Buthred's household, a person friendly enough to their views, to make them place him upon the vacant throne. During the time he was in favour with the Danes, and consequently in power, it appeared to be his whole object to enrich himself by extortion. Ethelred, a warrior eminent for virtues and talents, assisted Alfred in his warlike enterprizes, and probably during his distresses; for not long after them, he was made governor of London. He received also in marriage, his daughter Elfleda (called the English Zenobia), together with the earldom of Mercia.

While Alfred sallied occasionally from his retreat, with little hopes but to support himself and his followers, or take some revenge upon his enemies, he heard that Oddune, Earl of Devonshire,

d defeated an army of the Danes, from Ireland
d other parts, who attempted to land near Ap-
dore in that county, and had taken from them
famous standard, which they thought was en-
anted, and promised them success in war. Their
der, Hubba, fell, and after burying him in a
emn manner, they betook themselves to their
ips. On this event the prospects of Alfred be-
n to brighten.

——— *pulcher fugatis*
Ille dies Latio tenebris
Qui primus almâ risit adoreâ,
Dirus per urbes Afer ut Italas,
Ceu flamma per tædas, vel Eurus
Per Siculas equitavit undas.

When first glad conquest smil'd with golden
gleam,
And chas'd the dreary night, since Latium's foe,
Dire Africk's chief, laid waste her reign,
Fierce as the blazing torches glow,
Wild as the storm that sweeps Sicilia's main.

Mr. Boscawen.

He immediately went, disguised as a harper, to the
Danish camp at Eddington, in Wiltshire, and by

his wit, and skill in music, made himself so welcome to the Danes, that he had means of forming an exact judgment of the strength of the camp; which their dissolute and careless manner of life rendered more easily assailable. He then privately summoned those who remained attached to him from all parts; and a general meeting took place at Selwood forest, on the spot where "Alfred's Tower" was erected in honour of that event, by the family of Sir Richard Hoare, the present possessor of the estate. From hence the army marched, without halting, to Eddington; and though for a long time resisted by the Danes, with determined courage, it prevailed at length, and the scattered remnant of the enemy fled to a neighbouring castle, and soon after capitulated, in the year 880. Alfred gave the Danes their liberty, and granted to those, who embraced the Christian religion, a large tract of land in the northern parts of England. The princes of South Wales had already done homage to Alfred, for their principalities, and Anarawd, their elder brother, and prince of North Wales, now followed their example. Some accounts represent Scotland likewise, where Gregory the Great then reigned, as

ourting the advantage of a similar union with his country. Having thus established and extended his power in the prime of life, and being n the highest degree, possessed of every great and good quality, he was enabled more effectually to labour in the great work of laying the foundations of the English government, before his death took place, A. D. 900.

The above facts are true, according to the most credible accounts; but the texture of the fable, and other incidents, are wholly imaginary.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

ALFRED, *King of England.*

EDMUND, *the Son and Heir of Alfred, then very young.*

MERVIN, *Prince of South Wales, dependent on Alfred.*

ETHELRED, *Minister and General of the English.*

CIOLUPH, *an English Nobleman.*

A Danish Captain of Auxiliaries, brought to the Danes from Ireland.

CIOLUPH'S *Vassal.*

Officers, Harper, and other Attendants of the Queen.

Soldiers of different Nations engaged in the Battle.

WOMEN.

ELSITHA, *Queen of England.*

EDITHA, *an old Woman inhabiting the Cottage.*

Female Attendants.

PROLOGUE.

The picture deign to judge with candour due,
We now prepare to exhibit to your view;
Help'd by no study of effect, that draws,
In spite of nature, from the crowd applause:
It aims alone to please, with sober art,
Nor with pathetic varnish thrill the heart.
The subject you will find (howe'er remote,
To Britons born of memorable note,)
The final contest, when the Danes, who long
With rage relentless, and with numbers strong,
Threat'ned the hopes of England to o'erwhelm,
By Alfred's genius baffled, fled the realm;
And years of peace the victor could employ,
To plan that freedom which we now enjoy.

[to the side boxes.

You to whom rank and fortune grant on earth
A power unrivall'd to encourage worth;
See to what cause ye owe the prosperous state,
Whence we are destin'd to behold, elate,
The foreign tribes, who art's perfection boast,
On all sides hasten to our island's coast:

[looking round the house.

And you, who shew, without a wish to roam,
Britain's pre-eminence in arts at home;
And taste with industry combine, the land
To adorn, and distant markets to command;
Observe the fortune of that glorious day,
Since which the laws all equally obey;
Have rous'd your enterprize, and bid you feel
Your own advantage in the public weal:

[to the gallery.

You too, on whose support our state relies,
Of the just measures of the good and wise;
To which your ardour, by no hindrance check'd,
And loyal spirit, wisely give effect,
Proof to the specious arguments of foes;
See how that honour'd government arose:
Which ever has secur'd, and will secure,
Alike from violence the rich and poor;
And both of ease and freedom, gives you more,
With comfort join'd, than has been felt before.

[to all.

If these reflections, the design suggests,
Excite a generous bias in your breasts;
The solemn sentence we shall wait unaw'd,
Sure you will mildly censure—or applaud.

THE

BATTLE OF EDDINGTON.

ACT. I.

SCENE I.

Eddington. The morning mists and shades, cast by the surrounding hills, render the distant objects confused. In the foreground, which is illuminated by the early and slanting rays, a cottage, at the border of a wood, on one side, and another wood on the opposite one. Enter the English driving the Danes before them. Afterwards,

Mervin, Ethelred. Soldiers waiting.

Ethelred.

ADVANCE the prisoner, soldiers. Here I wait you. [*Exeunt Soldiers.*

SCENE II.

Mervin, Ethelred.

At length, brave Mervin, to our firm attack,
Have the fierce Danes given way, and, o'er the plain,
Soft-hearted pity hails the quiet hour,
Hope promises so near of victory.
Fortune looks kinder on us; yet I fear'd,
Believe me, prince, our enemy's success,
Who rallying, drove us, in the warm pursuit,
Back from this conquer'd station, threat'ned worse.
Much I suspect it sprang from treachery.

Merv. Thy words must fill each hearer with amaze.
Can Britons, valiant Ethelred, exist
So base of soul, as privately to treat
With foreign armies, and betray the cause,
Both of their country, and the Christian world!

Eth. I fear it is too certain, and my fears,
I trust, preserv'd us. I have now oppos'd
As Alfred's general, with due success,
Ere 'twas too late, the progress of the danger.
A timely movement has secur'd, perhaps,

The British army, and this plotting lord,
Cannot, I trust, surround us.

Merv. Who is this,
Rank only makes conspicuous to disgrace him?

Eth. [*giving a letter.*] That scroll may best
explain the doubtful story.

Merv. None, sure, can doubt. Lord Ceoluph
has sign'd it,
And treats full plainly with the troops of Ireland,
Who war against us opposite that ground,
Which, with his troops, he holds.

Eth. It is his vassal,
Who, ere he left the precincts of our army,
Was seized, and found the bearer of this letter.

Merv. What are thy orders? shall I seek the
traitor,
Among his very guards?

Eth. No; I will seek him.
We must be secret here, lest he escape,
Finding our purpose; and, in truth, respect
Is his just due, till evidence disprove
He entertain'd our former hope, to draw
These Irish to our side.

Merv. Whence rose your hope?

Eth. Well thou remember'st that late victory

On Devon's shore, when Danish Hubba fell,
And those who follow'd him, to invade us, fled
Astonish'd at our unexpected valour,
And sought their ships, leaving our men triumphant.
'Twas what first cheer'd our drooping spirits, and thou
Wast straight encourag'd to declare thy friendship;
And, with thy subjects of South Wales, hast join'd us!

Merv. 'Tis true, we boldly fix'd on our allies;
But how could Ireland's conquer'd sons discover
Aversion to their lords, or love to us?

Eth. Know that when, mask'd in a mean harper's habit,
The king pass'd unsuspected many a day
Within the Danish camp, he found those troops
Muttering reproach against their pagan masters!
While he, and every Briton, for the achievement,
Were grac'd with their unanimous applause,
Their zeal almost broke forth in mutiny.

Merv. Ah! why was not some earlier compact form'd?

Eth. The time would ill permit, and Alfred rather

Chose to forbear, when first our forces met,
Than lose the occasion to surprise our foes,
While they were plung'd in thoughtless revelry,
And dreamt not of us—But the vassal comes.

Merv. Name then the service, which thy wisdom deems
Best suited to the powers I consecrate
To the great cause we fight for.

Eth. Honour'd chief!
The inquiry, which our duty now enjoins,
May soon determine thee—wait here its issue.

SCENE III.

Mervin, Ethelred. To them re-enter Soldiers with Vassal in chains.

Eth. Dost thou still plead, the object of thy errand
Was for the general good?

Vass. Truth cannot vary:
My first assertion may condemn, or clear me.

Eth. Favour will not be shewn to stubbornness.

Vass. I seek no favour, but from English laws.

Eth. Thy speech is bold: But, with this letter, say,

What message did thy lord entrust to thee?

Vass. [*Aside.*] How answer this? [*loud.*] It was
to warn the Irish
That reconcilement would become two lands
So leagu'd, as legends tell us ours have been,
In constant amity, from earliest times:
Supporters both of the pure Christian faith;
(While unbelieving tribes nigh wrought its down-
fall)
Till one late lost that honourable title.
This he conjur'd the Irish to recover,
Again unite with us, and dread to leave
A growing labour to our single strength.

Eth. Thy tale is plausible, as is thy spirit
Ready to improve the advantage of free laws;
Whose lenity, though wise, oft screens the guilty,
And renders odious the firm foes of treason.
Yet do not they regard it. British justice
Can note the obstacles by freedom rais'd,
And glory in them.

SCENE IV.

Mervin, Ethelred, Vassal, Soldiers. To them a
Officer, and some of the Queen's Attendants.

2 *Off.* Give, respected lord,

Quick counsel to the queen, the fair Elsitha,
Who, with her son, young Edmund, seeks this cottage.

Eth. No sooner we succeed to advance one step,
Than fate returns us to the ground we left.
How came you?

2 *Off.* Captive led, from our retreat,
By stragglers, seeking here their countrymen;
But rescu'd, not far distant, by our troops.

Eth. How could they pierce the marshes which conceal'd you?

2 *Off.* They did not. Scarce you left us, when the queen
Found in the apartment an unopen'd writing,
Which darkly warn'd the king of ill designs.
Deaf to remonstrance, to o'ertake the army,
She rashly ventur'd forth.

Eth. Thou hast, brave prince,
An apt occasion to exert thy zeal:
Go to the army, and conduct a band
Hither, to guard the queen.

Merv. Ere long expect it. [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

Ethelred Attendants, Vassal, Soldiers.

Eth. You from her right remove, my friends, the prisoner;
But watch him near and closely. He must soon
To Alfred answer, on a charge of treason.
[*Exeunt Att. and Vassal.*

SCENE VI.

Ethelred, Attendants, Soldiers. To them, enter Elsitha, Edmund, and other Attendants.

Els. What did I hear of Alfred and of treason!
Alas, I plainly see, I have been led
By no false warning to resume my fear
Of treachery's deeds, and tremble for his life!
Those fetters, Ethelred, full surely prove it:
Yes, they declare that enemies at home
(The basest enemies) assist the Danes;
They hold their meetings, and they whet their daggers.

Not all the qualities that grace your king,
His spotless virtue, or his public spirit;
Not all his wisdom can unite the people. [*weeps.*

Eth. Princess, the danger is at length subdu'd,
And what there was, thy fears had magnified.

Els. Ah, be not too secure: for have not, say,
Too often base assassins, won by Danes,
Pledg'd them, ere this, their horrible support?

Eth. We now less fear it. His reviv'd adherents,
Rouz'd from the lethargy of long distress,
And still excited by this day's advantage,
Will keep a wakeful eye upon their prince,
Through the contending crowd. Hope feeds their zeal.
Even now, among the troops, to every mind
Does fond remembrance trace his various merits,
Mark'd in their looks, their voices, as we pass;
His matchless eloquence, his manly beauty,
His martial glory is the theme of all.

1 *Off.* My lord, our purpose waits thy approbation.

Eth. You mean to search that cot?

1 *Off.* Yes; o'er the plain
Its solitary shelter caught our notice,

Shewn by the rising sun; we came forthwith:
We would prepare it for the queen's reception.

Eth. Do so; but learn, I must depart in speed;
And be not too long absent from your queen,
Though you be thus advis'd. Suspect all counsel,
Till Mervin's presence, with the guards, secure you.

[*Exeunt* 1 *Off. and some Attendants, into the cottages.*

SCENE VII.

Elsitha, Edmund, Ethelred, Attendants, Soldiers.

Eth. Soldiers, return, like lightning, to the army;
And tell the king what here demands his presence!

1 *Sold.* We shall not linger in our way, to drive
Invaders from the land.

Eth. 'Twas spoke like Britons. [*Exeunt Soldiers.*

SCENE VIII.

Elsitha, Edmund, Ethelred, Attendants.

Eth. Princess, the expected chief will soon relate
What haste forbids me, and dispel thy fears. [*Exit.*

SCENE IX.

Elsitha, Edmund, Attendants.

Els. Ill hadst thou far'd, poor wretch, had it prov'd true
Thy father had been slain. How wouldst thou hope
To rule a country? how conduct thyself
When we had triumph'd over these our foes?
Edm. But often, sure, I heard thee tell my father,
That we should never gain the victory.
Els. Now, child, the times are chang'd; the wise assure us

Our new allies give us full cause for hope.
We shall with ease subdue our adversaries.
Edm. Who is the al y?
Els. The powerful king of Scotland;
Who sends his forces to support thy father;
And would ensure thy birthright by his arms.
Edm. May Heaven reward him for his gracious aid
Against the wicked; those who slew its priests,
And burnt the holy places of its worship.
Els. But all their brave endeavours will be vain,
If thou, an helpless claimant of the crown,
Canst not compose the jarring interests,
And guard with policy what they restore,
For thine, and England's surety.
Edm. I will try:
For I remember what my father said.
Els. What hast thou heard him say?
Edm. "A king's first care,"
He told us, "was to single virtue forth;
And make mankind respect its bright example."
Oft too he said, "he ought not to forget,
Those trusty subjects, who, in all his sufferings,
Fought at his side, or shar'd in his distress."
So would I treat my friends.

Els. And how thy foes?

Edm. As I have seen my father.

Els. How was that?

Edm. He spared the conquer'd Danes, and heard their prayers;

Saying, " resentment towards our enemies
Disgraced the conqueror, and was mean and useless.
The humbled wretch could not be humbled more;
'Twas folly then to spurn his gratitude,
When clemency might win it, fix his love,
And in his heart, though savage, plant the seeds
Of justice, loyalty, and mild religion."

Els. [*embracing him.*] Bless'd be thy memory, and that ready judgment
Which stamps its use; when slow maturing time
Shall waken in thy mind its latest fruits,
Mayst thou, my child, reward a parent's care;
Mayst thou pursue the footsteps of thy sire,
And reach, with him, true glory.

SCENE X.

Elsitha, Edmund, Attendants. To them, enter Attendants from the cottage.

1 *Off.* Queen, we found
The tenant of this cot, oppress'd with fears
Which the loud tumult of the battle round her
Had cherish'd long. The well known garb of Britons,
As on our entering troop she fix'd her eyes,
At once reliev'd her mind, and cheer'd her aspect.

SCENE XI.

Elsitha, Edmund, Attendants. To them, enter Editha, from the cottage.

Els. Much we rejoice, good cottager, to think
Thou art not willing to withhold thy aid
From Britons in distress.

Edm. Whate'er assistance

ies in the power of helpless Editha,
ou may command. It is, alas! too small,
esides her daily prayers to righteous Heaven
or the good king's success.

Els. Lead, worthy friend,
Where we may now repose: and take our thanks.
Know, loyalty in dangerous times like these,
Honours, however helpless, those who feel it,
And merits gratitude from all that's virtuous.

[*Exeunt Elsitha, Editha, and Edmund, into the cottage.*

SCENE XII.

Attendants.

1 *Off.* (*to the harper.*) Methinks your art, though not intended e'er
For such a place, were properly employ'd
To soothe the queen, and, while it can, prevent
The ills of painful thought.

2 *Off.* 'Tis wisely counsell'd:
Yes; let this desert hear harmonious sounds.

1 *Off.* At least, if ever, now she needs relief,

When treason to war's terrors adds its own,
So fearfully o'ermatching female weakness.

SONG.

You whom low gain, in secret, arms
Against fair Britain, favour'd queen,
Ah, hear her plead her varied charms,
Of social towns, and meadows green!
See bliss obey her sage command;
And spare, ah spare your native land!

If other climes his gifts produce,
Where vintage crowns the race of toil;
Or fruits of a more tasteful juice,
That ripen in the sunny soil;
Heaven showers on us with lavish hand;
Then spare, ah spare your native land!

Our chosen fields, the happy reign
Of freedom boast, with reason join'd;
Hence industry o'er every plain
Surveys the wonders she design'd:

Wide harvests wave, flocks feeding stand,
And bid you spare your native land.

No common ardour fires the soul
Of Britons that, to Alfred true,
Mark his past laws the unjust controul,
And hope his future toils to view.
For be your rising greatness plann'd,
Who bids you spare your native land.

He, to repel the furious foe,
First shelter'd with a fleet our coast;
(Reserv'd our best defence to show,)
Which henceforth shall be Britain's boast.
This praise, at least, his deeds demand;
Then spare, ah spare your native land!

Or if this king, this country, fail,
Ye bold, to merit your applause;
Haste where less haughty lords prevail;
Where justice springs from freer laws.
Go; ease our fears, a blameless band;
And spare, ah spare your native land!

SCENE XIII.

Attendants. To them enter Ceoluph.

1 *Off.* Thou, whom we see approaching to this spot,
Art come, we hope, and by thy garb presume,
With friendly purpose.

Ceo. Friendly sure to Britons
He comes, who, summon'd to a meeting here,
Aims only to deliberate on their welfare.
Yes, Ceoluph still owns unrivall'd zeal;
And say, intent upon what separate project,
You shun the war?

1 *Off.* Our office is our answer:
We are not among those the war has brought.

Ceo. What! is the queen arriv'd? the event I feel
Sufficient to alarm a loyal breast:
But say, can Ceoluph's advice avail her;
Or has she met with earlier counsellors?

1. *Off.* Some we have seen, and thankfully decline
The courteous offer.

Ceo. Yet I still may serve you
By joyful tidings: for I wait the king.
Vass. [*behind the scenes.*] Yes, 'tis Lord Ceoluph. O give me way.
Ceo. These accents seem familiar to my ear.
1 *Off.* We only know 'tis one accus'd of treason;
Perhaps for this thou hast the royal summons.

SCENE XIV.

Ceoluph, Attendants. To them, enter Vassal, breaking from his keepers.

Vass. O lend thy aid to suffering innocence!
Hear, my good lord.
Ceo. I know this man, my friends,
And curious am to learn what shameful charge—
Vass. I heard the news of the intended meeting,
My lord, deliver'd in a well known voice,
And came. O tell the king my innocence.
Ceo. Let me in private question him, my friends;
I gather from his agitated air,

He less confusedly would unfold his tale
If unobserv'd.

1 *Off.* [*to the Attendants.*] Retire you to the wood
From whence the prisoner came, and thence observe him,
As is your duty, but remote from hearing:
We, with the caution which our general counsell'd,
Will, in the cottage, near the queen remain.

[*going.*

Ceo. But still beware lest her too great impatience
Afflict her in the important conference;
Say not the king waits here.

1 *Off.* My lord, I will not.

[*Exeunt* 1 *Officer with a few into the cottage, and the other Attendants into the wood.*

SCENE XV.

Ceoluph, Vassal.

Ceo. Now we may freely speak. What means those chains?

Do they not bode such knowledge of our purpose,
As blasts all hope.

Vass. No, thanks to the old spirit
Of Saxon liberty, whose nicety brooks not
That summary conviction which denies
The respite I enjoy. I firmly answer'd,
Trusting that time would furnish means of flight.
O my good lord, how hadst thou smil'd to hear
Thy slave debate the interests of Ireland! [*laughs.*

Ceo. 'Twas wisely done; the plea that freedom yields us,
Shall make its cause our own, though we despise it:
But say, must Alfred and his family
Meet at my risk; he will not soon release me,
Hearing from them that treason's in the wind.

Vass. I guess'd thy late injunction was to hinder
The queen's ill-timed appearance, and 'twas well;
Yet art thou ignorant of half our hopes.
Know, enterprise will have a noble field,
And we be gainers by our seeming hindrance;
Retarded only with his queen and son,
No vulgar hostages, to join the Danes.

Ceo. What is thy plan? say, did the Danes suggest,

On my first message, any means of this?

Vass. Yes; so they hop'd to repossess this station;
I thought the mention useless, when our general
Led on the charge, and overbore resistance.
Then quickly seize the occasion: feign a flight,
The Irish will pursue, and our mix'd bands
From ambush burst on these defenceless quarters.

Ceo. But why defenceless? you expect I judge
The guards.

Vass. They will possess the avenues
Conducting to this ground.

Ceo. And so repel us.

Vass. No; beneath one a Roman arch was found
To pass unseen, that in the distant wood
Is open'd, and appears. 'Twas pierc'd so late,
Not even the neighbouring tenant of this cottage
Can give due notice of the wish'd surprise,
Should you attempt it; but its outlet, mark'd
By yonder rugged hillock, will admit you
Ev'n to this spot, deceiving every guard.

Ceo. I know not how we may fall back unseen
Again, so far retreating under ground;
Above it, now we shall be closely watch'd.

Vass. Then quickly leave the king, and seek
the army.

Ceo. No; first the chance of a more flattering
fortune
Must not pass slighted by; for, be assured,
I meditate one final effort now
To gain the royal favour, long enjoy'd
By the unworthy minions of his reign.
O think how I should triumph in their downfall!—
Besides, the English cause is now successful.

Vass. Be not deceiv'd; he never will desert
His loyal servants.

Ceo. Am I then to learn
That interest is man's god, and Alfred human?
My power is matchless in the land, my will,
If kindly he receive the overture,
Prepar'd to crown him a despotic prince.

Vass. Thou wilt delay the attempt, my lord,
till time
(Which we most fear,) give credit to the charge;
And ev'n thy own retainers dare not aid thee.

Ceo. If I succeed in this, remember, thou
Wilt soar with me to all the heights of favour:

Vass. And, if thou fail, captivity will sink me.

Ceo. That is less sure—When thou could hope so late
For means of flight, what raises thy despair?

Vass. But see, the king approaches with his followers;
To wait their coming might be fatal to thee,
If he have heard the tale of our detection;
And hazard thy arrest—See, he speaks to them.

Ceo. 'Tis but to enjoin them to remain aloof;
While he comes on alone. Thanks to yon thickets,
He has not seen one messenger to instruct him;
Do thou draw only farther still from hence
The queen's attendants, lest discovery
Again be risk'd.

Vass. I go, without delay. [*Exit.*

SCENE XVI.

Ceoluph. To him, enter Alfred.

Alf. A sound of voices reach'd me, as I came,
Assisted by this stillness of the air;

fear, my lord, I mar some conference.

Ceo. 'Twas one subordinate, who listening took
His orders; he resigns his place to Alfred.

Alf. This careful secrecy becomes a meeting
Of different sort; time only now permits me
To ask thee the position of thy troops.

Ceo. Yet did I dare to think, ere Alfred form'd
The solemn contract between king and people,
And rude beginnings of the British state,
The well-meant counsels of plain honesty
Might gain his patient hearing.

Alf. Is't then so?
And mean'st thou to discuss what might employ
A senate long, now in the hour of battle.

Ceo. Yes; for 'tis now that prudence most requires
The close discussion of this weighty subject;
While thou hast yet within thy power the means
To make it useful. I bestow those means:
My well-prov'd followers, if thou say the word,
Shall, when the rest victoriously disband
After our tedious toils, remain in arms;
They shall compel the people to adopt
What laws thou wilt, and prove that Ceoluph
May be suspected, but was ever loyal.

Alf. 'Tis, I acknowledge, an important counsel,
Nor mark'd with feeble resolution, this
To levy war upon my subjects, led
By dreams of fancied good. Yet let me say,
Our maxims differ wide; I hold, my lord,
That only is, in states, an wholesome change
Which springs from peace and unanimity.

Ceo. May then no spirit of rebellious sort,
We could prevent, burst forth among the people,
And spread destructive to whate'er we prize?
If so, to extinguish it asks active care.

Alf. What instance canst thou bring in proof of it?

Ceo. Their swelling hopes, that undissembled zeal
With which all cry, "Alfred will surely grant us
Those rights our Saxon ancestors possess'd;
He will restore us the regretted jury."

Alf. 'Tis that same argument, which, in thy judgment,
Declares them wrong, that rescues them, in mine,
From every blame, and justifies their hopes:
For be assur'd, if any recompence
Of public services to me were grateful,
It were that Britons should, in future, say,

Alfred establish'd here the ancient jury."

Ceo. Did I, as clearly know that government
Thy wisdom plans, as this divulged intention,
I should not hesitate, my liege, to affirm
What rights consist with it, or what possess
Too uncongenial natures to endure it.
If to the people's judgment thou confide
The helm of state, thy reverence of their will,
Steer they or wrong or right, will ne'er prevent them.

Alf. Think not I wish democracy should rule
In England's realm: too rare is its success.

Ceo. And yet I know no other government;
Where such wide liberty of speech and action,
Unaw'd by power, can prove the people's boast.

Alf. Instead of governments which have been tried,
Think but of one Rome's sages sought to try,
And 'twill unriddle all the mystery:
For 'tis that time (which never may return)
When theory, to statesmen oft delusive,
Can, without dread of harm, give law to practice.
I hope, my lord, to see in this our island,
Power duly dealt among three different orders;

King, lords, and commons; and Heaven speed
their counsels!

Ceo. [*Aside.*] Here is an unexpected road to
favour:
I'll instant strike into the lucky track.

Alf. What sayst thou of our hope to realize
The beauteous visions of immortal men
In the calm shades of philosophic ease?

Ceo. Mute with amazement, I contemplate, sire,
That penetrating sense which could discover
When theory lays down her harlot arts,
And give her heighten'd charms secure to Britons.
Yes, let me now congratulate the country,
In which true liberty shall first be seen:
The nations of the earth, in future times,
Shall view with envy this high-favour'd isle;
(Where policy unites each true advantage,)
And, while they sum its blessings, think of Alfred.

Alf. It gives me joy, since thou art satisfied
With my design, that such repugnance conquer'd,
Leaves us no further subject of delay.

Ceo. Believe it, ardently, my liege, I hope
To second thy great aim, and, if thou speak,
Hasten to execute whate'er commands

re given, and justify thy confidence:
ame but the office thou design'st.

Alf. My lord?

Ceo. No slow or sluggish agent shall I be
To do thy will; tell me, I say, my liege,
What warlike enterprize shall be my task
To forward thy intent, and how I may,
Partaking of thy councils, prove at once
My secrecy and zeal.

Alf. The topic seems
More copious than erewhile, nor longer fit
To be debated here. Tell me, my lord,
Where lie thy troops?

Ceo. That path conducts to them.

Alf. Then know, I purpos'd to inspect them
with thee,
From some adjoining place, and on our way
Can hear whatever thou mayst choose to treat of.
Dispatch that business soon, which, when I came,
Employ'd thee, and o'ertake me in the wood.

[*Exit.*

SCENE XVII.

Ceoluph.

Ceo. I see how likely is my suit to prosper.—
Neglect in one, whom we can harm, becomes
Intolerable as insult.—[*looking after Alfred.*]
My obedience
Thou hast once more, 'tis after that—revenge.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The progress of the day discovers the background of the prospect, hitherto in shade, as the foreground is at present. The ruins now appear, on a distant hill, of a monastery, which had been destroyed by the Danes; and near which, as was usual, a stream passes, rushing down the declivity.

Attendants.

1 *Off.* I tremble, hearing you, to view yon scene
Display'd, so brightly, by the ascending sun,
The work of no far-distant enemy.
Then has the chief, by this deceitful tale,
Withdrawn the king from hence.
2 *Off.* We could not find them;
Though promised Alfred would survey the ground,

So better to secure the queen; and then
Would hasten to her presence.

1 *Off.* While designs
Are form'd against us, do our guards delay?

2 *Off.* No; late we saw the prince disposing them,
And told him our distress, ere we return'd
To make it known to you. Behold, he comes.

SCENE II.

Attendants. To them, enter Mervin.

1 *Off.* Prince, we would gladly learn what cause of fear
This lord's suspicious conduct gives to us.

Merv. The general's promptness has remov'd already,
My friends, all cause; he knew no hostile force
Could leave the assembled army, ere these succours;
He rather hopes the king will be deceiv'd
By some new wile; from which his wisdom guard him!

the queen need my presence, I would know,
nd do her will; I shall not be far off. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Attendants.

1 *Off.* I will convey the message, and meanwhile
Let music's sound exhilarate the queen,
As she desir'd, commending graciously
Our late attention. [*Exit into the cottage.*

SCENE IV.

Attendants.

2 *Off.* [*to the harper.*] Far thou wilt not, sure,
Seek for a subject; to the worthy prince,
Who late has left us, thou may'st now do honour,
And sing the praise of Arthur, and of Wales.

SONG.

When Arthur fill'd the island-throne,
He stemm'd the boisterous flood that pour'd
The exhaustless strife; on hosts alone
The champion urg'd his guardian sword,
Piercing the Angle's firm array;
The Power invok'd to Christians known,
As shed its shining blade a ray
Auspicious to the Briton's fame,
And, to the savage tribe of Thor,
Amazement, o'er the files of war,
And death, where'er it darted, came.

Chiefs prostrate lie, whose aspect awes,
As oaks with ruin heap the ground,
Fall'n, ere the threats of lightning pause,
And cease the whirlwind-waste around.
For toils like these, the Cambrian sings,
Absolv'd from nature's common laws,
The destin'd sire of future kings
Reclines on flowers of fairy land;
And, o'er the race he fir'd in vain
With freedom, and his ancient reign,
Again shall stretch his wish'd command.

But tell, my harp, that from on high
Subdued the terrors of the tomb;
He sees fierce arts from Albion fly,
Rejoicing in his country's doom;
Sees old Consent, and public Care
Greet us with titles arms deny,
And sends his banish'd bands to share
A friendship may forever live;
While to the land the victor sways
Their names alike (if such be praise)
The foes of other ages give.

SCENE V.

Attendants. To them, enter Alfred meeting
1 Officer.

1 *Off.* The prince, my liege, has doubtless made our state
Known, as you pass'd the guards.
Alf. 'Tis true, I know it;
But Ethelred ere this had told me all,
When, with the traitor Ceoluph, I saw him.

1 *Off.* Joyful, as Britons, we behold our king
Deliver'd from his snares.

Alf. I know not, friends,
If we may suffer more from his designs.
Suspicious of his faith, I had resolv'd
With him to view his troops: which late employ'd
us:
But when we saw the distant Ethelred,
This traitor, fertile in deceitful pretexts,
Told me,—that now to better counsellors
He left his king, and went where duty call'd him.
Long I observ'd him march with hurried pace;
But could not learn his purpose, till at length
He disappear'd among his own retainers.

1 *Off.* What dost thou order us, my liege, to do?

Alf. Fly with the queen and prince, avoiding
here
To leave them longer to the event of war.
By me instructed, Ethelred will keep
His trusty bands prepar'd to second Mervin,
And rush, if needed, to protect this station.

[*Exit into the cottage.*

SCENE VI.

Attendants.

1 *Off.* Well does the king, to guard, with each precaution,
His helpless queen against a barbarous foe.

2 *Off.* Thy words denote unwonted apprehension.

1 *Off.* The woman's late discourse, had'st thou with us
Enter'd the cottage, might have prov'd to thee
What terror may these savage tribes inspire,
Uninfluenc'd by respect for sex or age.

2 *Off.* 'Twere dreadful, surely; but since now arriv'd,
The guards, I hope, will cover our retreat.

1 *Off.* Heaven grant they do—But hark, the latch is mov'd:
Fall back. The approaching king will soon instruct us.

SCENE VII.

Enter Alfred, Elsitha, and Attendants, from the cottage.

Alf. Yes; hasten to the pious hermit's cell
I have describ'd, hid in embowering woods;
Which, though not distant, has been still conceal'd
From wandering Danes, and ever must defy
Their closest search. The deviating track
Is mark'd too plainly by the signs I nam'd,
To cost thee pains to find, or need inquiry.
Haste, my Elsitha; now delay were fatal.

Els. Ah! rather fly this unavailing strife
Betimes, and in some corner of the earth
Let thy sad family enjoy thy presence,
And boast the certainty thou liv'st to cheer them,
When war with treason threats, and this drear wild
Renders more terrible the form of danger,
How killing 'tis to part—that thou may'st meet it!

Alf. Whence is this fear? or where, in thee
once seen,
The unshaken spirit which so long surpris'd me

While lurking in our wretched residence?
Where the gay smiles, that half o'ercame my
sorrows?

Els. If duty warn'd me never to make known
Wishes and fears that might increase thy troubles,
Or interfere beyond what suits a queen,
Think'st thou I felt, though silent, less alarm?
Employ'd in studious privacy alone,
(Whose charms thou taught'st me) or domestic cares,
I aim'd not to embarrass lawful power
By base intrigue, or open opposition:
On such forbearance resolutely bent,
I sought, and gain'd the favour of the people.

Alf. Even as thy virtue merits admiration,
So may thy firmness, my Elsitha, shine
With equal rays, and charm with blended lustre.
How should we mourn, O, think, each ruin'd hope,
Misled by coward fear, or senseless caution?
Ill-fated outcasts in some foreign land,
Soon should we find the poverty we bear
Our future portion, or rely alone
On pitying courtesy for ill-earn'd ease,
And, in its very kindness, feel our fortune.

Els. And dost thou urge to me those weighty
reasons?

Or think I swell with the proud hope of greatness?—
O Alfred, how should I rejoice to share
Even the poor rustic's frugal, humble lot,
So I might see in safety those whose love
Far dearer ties had rooted in my heart.
Nor would, I trust, thy sorrows in retirement
Be thus oppressive; but when study's charms
(Which most avail to banish thy sad thoughts)
Have ceas'd their influence, my unwearied cares—

Alf. 'Tis not the fear of want, but of disgrace,
Visits the bosom of the wise or virtuous.
Base is the ruler, if, while hope remains,
He leaves his country threat'ned by a foe;
But if his steady zeal be known to all,
And lawless violence alone prevail
By force of numbers, or the wrongs of fortune,
Then he may quit, without a blush, the contest;
Then foreign kings receive him with respect,
And all their subjects, when they see, applaud him.

Els. That time is come for thee. O, instantly bear us
From this devoted land! where hope no more
Can tempt to stay.

Alf. [*separating with enthusiasm.*] Hope, sayst thou?

Els. And pray tell me,
When thou hast suffer'd, many a mournful year,
The worst calamities sad war inflicts,
And art again contending in the field
With the same barbarous and successful foe,
From farther strife what can thy country hope?

Alf. Each flattering destiny that can exalt
A nation's glory; cultivated fields,
Where now inhospitable forests spread,
And, where the Thames reflects our humble dwellings,
The capital of earth, and happy seat
Of the protected arts; its busy streets
Crowded with industry's rejoicing sons;
While on the matchless stream unnumber'd masts,
Like a wide wood, attract the stranger's eye,
And prove the commerce of the world our own.

Els. O cease to be deluded by thy wishes,
And in thy fruitless rhapsodies proceed;
Cease to repeat what I so oft have heard thee,

That we should be renown'd in history
For noble deeds, be sovereigns of the sea,
Happy at home, and held abroad the refuge
Of weakness still, and terror of ambition—
No; never, never shall such times arrive.

Alf. If I have rais'd too high my expectation,
'Tis not, be sure, without sufficient cause.
In my brave Britons I behold a race
Dauntless in war, but mild and just in peace;
Fill'd with that public spirit, whose pure aim,
And prompt activity extend improvement,
And fir'd with every great and generous view:
As if rare properties of air and soil
Could add peculiar energy to nature;
Refine their heads and animate their hearts.

SCENE. †

Alfred, Elsitha, Attendants. To them enter
1 *Soldier.*

Alf. Sounds lately heard inform, with this thy presence,
Of some advantage newly won or lost.
Comest thou from Ethelred?
1 *Sold.* He bade me say,
The desperate foes, with scarce diminish'd strength,
Advisedly, in one arduous effort centering
Courage and skill, and charging with success,
Compell'd us to retreat; nor yield the ground:
Yet knows he thy appearance soon will shine
Our gloom away. In such an unwished chance,
When fell invasion menaces a realm,
He says, if some brave prince, his country's hope,
In whom the activity and fire of youth
Enchant the soldiery, dare lend his aid
To inspire the battle; soon all see, at once,
The danger vanish, where he leads the way;

† This scene has been added since the publication of the play.

Soon on the assailants do they fiercely rush,
And drive them recreant back.

Alf. Tell him, I come. [*Exit* 1 *Soldier.*

SCENE.

Alfred, Elsitha, Attendants.

Els. And wilt thou, Alfred, then delay to fly
Peril so imminent?

Alf. Yes—as his duty
Injoins the king of such deserving subjects.

Els. Whate'er the valued qualities they boast,
They cannot prosper, when, in their misfortunes,
Heaven plainly seems unfriendly to their cause.

Alf. It will be then the part of noble souls
To leave an high example of their firmness
To future times; to brave superior power
Even at the price of life, and be the last
To flatter pride, and to submit to wrong.

Els. That were resistance to the Almighty's will.

Alf. No; rather say, 'twere a devout submission
To this great trial of our faith and valour
Th'Almighty has ordain'd; nor, erring, think,

Elsitha, virtue can be chang'd by fortune.
Oft, o'er the field, in which the patriot strives
For blameless victory, do gazing angels,
Forwarn'd of his inevitable fate,
Shed their celestial tears, and, when he falls,
They venerate the spot as holy ground.

Els. This praise of slaughterous deeds might suit a heathen;
But, Alfred, thee far less, who art a Christian,
And oft would'st talk of thy contempt of war.
Our mild religion, well thou know'st, enjoins
Pardon of injuries, and bids us live
In mutual love, fraternity, and peace.

Alf. These Heaven-taught maxims often may mislead
Through feeble judgment, or dark policy,
That, envying the fair fame to virtue given,
May feign its worth imperfect to supplant it:
Though, when its arts have prosper'd, it must yield
To like necessity, or act less justly.
To live in lasting peace, is, to the good,
The most approv'd condition: but, if wrong,
Be ever active to disturb their quiet,
'Tis love of peace that arms them to control it.

Els. Then haste; pursue the course thy reason warns,
And thy stern virtue grant what thou canst wish
Of honour and renown. Lead forth with thee
Those who may share thy danger, and enjoy
Alike the loud applauses of the world.
Go; you will leave at home, to humbler hopes,
Your weeping wives, a melancholy band,
Who, at their orphan children's future fate
Shall soon be seen to tremble; while, oppress'd
By our contagious grief, the saddening land—

Alf. No; I distrust not, leaving thee, that virtue
Which is so fully tried; thou wilt not cherish
Such dangerous grief; nor will the fair of Britain.
Howe'er they move in that appointed sphere
Which gives its wonted softness to their lustre,
Withdrawn from notice; yet they mark a course
Steady and sure, and, while they charm, assist us.
Their spotless faith, from mild discretion sprung,
Would scorn to furnish arms to discontent,
Or, with vain fears, conspire against their country.

Els. Spare thy reproof: acquit me of a weakness,
And one by thee so blam'd. I would obey thee;
Yes, would anticipate by ready deeds

Thy least desire; yet say, while I behold thee,
What is the secret, through whose mystic virtue
(For such, perhaps, has been reveal'd to thee)
A separation, cruel as I dread,
Can prove our wish?

Alf. To know it is our duty. [*Exit.*

SCENE VIII.

Elsitha, Attendants.

Els. Stay, Alfred, O! [*swoons.*

1 *Off.* Look quickly to the queen!
Support her fainting frame.

SCENE IX.

Elsitha, Attendants. To them enter Editha.

1 *Off.* Lend, aged matron,
Thy aid. Untoward chance!—But she revives.

Els. Afford, good friend, the hospitable shelter
Of thy adjoining roof, that short repose

May there recall my dissipated spirits!
I feel my strength returning--Now lead on.
[*Exeunt Els. and Ed. into the cottage.*

SCENE X.

Attendants.

1 *Off.* Go, tell the prince that Alfred has left orders
For our departure. We attend the troops;
As destin'd to escort our helpless band. [*Exit one.*

SCENE XI.

Attendants.

1 *Off.* The queen's recover'd strength, ere long my friends,
Will prove the signal of our journey. [*a noise under ground*] Heav'ns!
What noise was that?
2 *Off.* 'Twas surely not far off. [*noise repeated.*

Off. Alas! the enemy, past doubt, prevail'd
To undermine this station. All is lost,
Unless we prosper in the attempt to bear
The queen to safety. Follow, and assist me.
[*they approach the cottage.*

SCENE XII.

Attendants. To them, [*noise repeated.*] *enter Ceoluph, with his men from the subterranean passage; stops the Attendants, and speaks to them.*

Ceo. Stir you no further, but resign the charge
Ye cannot save; I claim it for the Danes.
[*to the Soldiers.*] Do you obey the orders ye receiv'd.
Fill up that passage straight, to stop the foe;
This is the cottage ye must first surround;
And marching slow and silent through the wood,
Soon will ye reach the unsuspecting guards,
And find their terror second your assault.
[*Exeunt Soldiers.*

SCENE XIII.

Ceoluph, Attendants; and some Soldiers.

1 *Off.* We hope, howe'er success has crown'd
your efforts,
That civil treatment will not be denied
Your royal captives. In compassion grant it.
Ceo. Your treatment will be found what ye
deserve:
If ye presume on daring violence,
Or are detected in intrigue, beware;
The eyes of these surrounding troops are on you
[*Exit*

SCENE XIV.

Attendants.

1 *Off.* [*after a silence.*] We, who so little coul
foresee the future,
Harbour'd just fear; while our best chiefs hav
err'd

Who deem'd us safe. So weak is human wisdom!

2 *Off.* I dread to think how knowledge of her fortune
May overwhelm the queen. What dost thou counsel?

1 *Off.* Far be it from us, with imprudent haste,
To inform the queen of these o'erpowering news:
Till it prove fruitless to conceal them longer,
Spite of our ceaseless efforts. No, my friends,
Rather let us dissemble our reflections;
And do thou, harper, wake some air, to banish
Suspicion of our terrible reverse;
As only thoughtful of thy custom'd office.
I will forthwith endeavour to detain her
Till some more favourable turn of fortune. [*Exit.*

SCENE XV.

Attendants.

SONG.

O nations, urged by hostile fate
To brave, in adverse ranks the war,

Taught Heaven's mild lore, nor mov'd of late
The praise of savage feats to abhor;

For ever quench your kindling rage;
And ah! no more that vengeance waste,
Doom'd for the impious head above;
Or timely seek, with rival haste,
Such lenient aid of peaceful love
As may its lingering ills assuage.

Ere, on each shore, in strength secure,
We saw the invaders with amaze,
Our drooping country could endure,
With better hope, tempestuous days.

Now hapless Christians ease no more,
By social deeds, their common way,
Among the rocks encircling life;
But rudely forc'd asunder stray,
And menac'd by the storms of strife,
Thoughtful of help enjoy'd before.

Thou, Ireland, long thy silent sighs
With Britain's mingled, shalt remain;

From Heaven imploring future ties,
That mutual may your sons maintain

In endless union, bless'd and free;
Whence the fair isles, with strength combin'd,
Shall happiness, in every land,
From arms protect, and wrong design'd;
And amid waves, securely stand,
The citadels of liberty.

SCENE XVI.

Attendants. To them,
Enter Elsitha, Edmund, and 1 Officer, from the cottage.

Els. No, do not urge me longer to delay:
Heaven has, I trust, inspir'd, and will support me;
You see me ready to obey with firmness
The late commands of Alfred; with what haste
You choose we follow.
[*the Attendants seem thunderstruck.*
But what means that air
Of blank confusion, and that backward silence?

Edm. [*pointing behind the scenes.*] O mother,
what a crowd is there, and there!
I did not see those men, when first I came.

Els. Ah! now the riddle is expounded clearly;
Yes, the successful enemy possesses
This spot, and holds us prisoners. Well I know it:
But say, (if it be true,) say, where is Alfred?
Sure he escap'd not, and a tenfold fury
Prepares to sacrifice this valiant cause
Of many a pagan's death; this dread of Danes!
I know what ye would say: yes, at this moment
Does Alfred fall. [*weeps.*

[*Edmund runs with an intention of going out.*

1 *Off.* Where dost thou haste, young prince?

Edm. I'll go to all the soldiers round, and ask
them
To spare my father.

1 *Off.* Prince, thy father's safe.
We have not heard the king partakes our fortune
In this mishap, and trust he fled ere this:
He is beyond the power of all these soldiers.

Edm. Pray tell me, do they want to kill us too?

Els. Come, come, my son; let us retire from
hence,

As suits the wretched, where, with thoughts compos'd,
We may implore due fortitude from him
Who can deliver us from all distress,
And conquer all our enemies. This way.

[*Exit Elsitha, and Edmund, into the cottage.*

SCENE XVII.

Attendants.

1 *Off.* How touching is this state of tender youth,
That half discerns, and rather on worst woes
Looks with the eye of curiosity,
Than with the heart of fear: ev'n the queen seems
Too far by pious resignation rais'd
Above the sad calamity she suffers:
To let dejection lower upon her brow;
Yet much I fear these Danes; and see advance
The British lord, hither conducting one.
Something is, sure, projected, which concerns us.

SCENE XVIII.

Attendants. To them, enter Ceoluph, and Dane.

Ceo. Abandon straight, to one more worthy trust,
The place where our insulted lenity
Permitted you to stay. Ye shall no more
Repeat your treasons.

1 *Off.* What are they, my lord?

Ceo. 'Tis rumour'd ye have harp'd seditious tunes
That praise the ancient friendship of our isles,
So to corrupt the Irish.

1 *Off.* No such thought,
My lord, had we; nor e'er could have surmis'd
An insignificant attempt to cheer
The drooping queen had drawn this deep attention.

Ceo. Retire, and to this valiant Dane resign
Your forfeit station. [*Exit.*

SCENE XIX.

Dane, Attendants.

Dane. It perhaps were best,
You first appriz'd her of the purpos'd change;
Lest unprepar'd she ill support the trial.

1 *Off.* Soldier, we thank thee for the generous counsel;
And trust it bodes a spirit that inclines not
To load her weakness with increase of sorrow.

[*Exit into cottage.*

SCENE XX.

Dane, Attendants.

2 *Off.* Eager to shew, in promptness of obedience,
A slight return of kindness, we retire,
And wait at distance, Dane, thy farther orders:
Ev'n gratitude's most unimportant favours
Gain from the just regard. [*Exeunt Attendants.*

SCENE XXI.

Dane. To him,
Enter Elsitha, and 1 *Officer, from the cottage.*

1 *Off.* The Dane is yonder. [*Exit.*

SCENE XXII.

Elsitha, Dane.

Els. Surpris'd at the respect, I learn, good soldier,
Thou pay'st to wretched captives, I came forth;
Willing to testify a grateful spirit.
Dane. My conduct, princess, is, howe'er it seem,
What justice and humanity require,
And my religion dictates. Were it different,
'Twould be at variance with its holy precepts;
And draw Heaven's known displeasure.
Els. At thy words
I am perplex'd. Say, art thou not a Dane?

Dane. Those hard-fought battles, where, for many a year
I strove, accompanied by Danish troops,
Bear ample witness, princess, to my country.

Els. Suspect not that, in any country, Dane,
I doubt the worth of virtue such as thine.
Much I admire whatever unknown stock
Teems with such noble fruit; and think the hand
Of Heaven has scatter'd wide the precious seeds
Of true religion, and will bless the harvest.
What light so surely guides thy happy course?

Dane. One that is darken'd by no cloud of error,
As thou wilt own.

Els. In vain I seek thy meaning.

Dane. When lately Ireland, added to our conquests,
Receiv'd our bands, to mingle, as chance led,
Among her own inhabitants, who, long
Ere this, profess'd the peaceful faith of Christ,
We, at their blameless, inoffensive manners
Felt secret awe.

Els. Saint Patrick, well I know,
Had civiliz'd the island where he preach'd,
And made it honour'd in the Christian world,

We name it, for this cause, the Isle of Saints.
But hasten to thy tale, and say what follow'd.

Dane. Full many, influenc'd by the fair example,
Embrac'd with ardour the divine religion,
And all remain'd, except a few; but I,
Having the confidence of those who led us,
Attended them, at their command, to invade
The coasts of England.

Els. Has, then, providence
So unexpectedly display'd its bounty,
As, in the depth of our despair, to shew us
Favour so rare, and in our prison-guard,
Bestow the best protector?

Dane. To that title, princess,
My conduct is not destitute of claim.
Not to win glory, but restrain the rage
Of barbarous countrymen, at length, in war
Is my sole care. In these surrounding fields,
Oft have the helpless, of each sex and age,
Obtain'd their safety through my secret counsel,
Or needful mediation, from the Danes.

Els. Bless'd is the doctrine whose benign effects
Are thus conspicuous!

Dane. No; the progress yet,

Princess, is small, which Christianity
Has made; and, till this time, its peeping dawn
Hardly gives notice of its cheerful day.
But, by degrees, o'er Europe and the world,
I trust, its peaceful influence will extend;
One mode of policy, one form of virtue
Shall science slowly plan for human use,
(Unless dissentious vanity obstruct it)
Shall steadily remove the ills of life,
And every bar to happiness and virtue;
Till, while we chance to wonder at the change,
And then look back upon a barbarous age,
We bless the heavenly cause which could produce it.

[*Exit, following Attendants: the Queen slowly, as in devout contemplation, enters the cottage.*

ACT. III.

SCENE I.

The orders having been executed for filling the arched passage, the prospect is discovered which it concealed before; and while the rest of the background seems shaded by passing clouds, exhibits the stream, after it has reached the valley, serpentining through a variegated country.

Enter Ceoluph, and Vassal.

Vass. The work that yonder was enjoin'd the Irish,
I see, my lord, is done. That way is barr'd
Against the enemy. 'Tis fortunate
They did not fail us.

Ceo. Yet thy words alarm me:
The prisoners must not be entrusted longer
To spirits so inclin'd. Where is the Dane?

Vass. I saw him late among the queen's attendants,
Who were dismiss'd, disposing them in safety.

Ceo. Here will I wait him. Say, meanwhile, if more
Thy spies inform'd thee of the daring language
These Irish held.

Vass. Some praise the wide renown
And virtues of the king; some the queen's beauty,
And mourn her own distresses, and her son's.
Others lament the oppression of the Danes,
Vowing that almost, to support its ills,
Christian obedience fails. The loyal, too,
They say, can feel, and, in necessity
Behold a plea that sanctifies resistance.

Ceo. And shall we trust to such the royal prisoners?

Vass. Far be it from our thoughts, my honour'd lord.

Ceo. Shall I, for pity of their sufferings, leave them
With Christians, who might pay them much respect,
But would betray their trust? What is to me
Their mild captivity, or soften'd sorrow?
They would, I doubt not, rather than by foes,

Be guarded by the Irish; but if such
As are acknowledg'd friends, o'erlook their welfare,
And careless of the caution it enjoins us,
Forfeit our confidence, let them be thank'd for't.

Vass. My lord, I own abuse of such indulgence
Well merits punishment.

Ceo. And they shall have it.
Yes, the barbarians will ere long surround them;
That wanton spirit which, remov'd till now,
Has been without an object, shall be seen
In full display: harshness, or insolence,
Pain, or whate'er besides caprice inflicts
Shall seem a grievous change—

Vass. Softly, my lord;
For we may hence be heard.—And see, at length,
The Dane approaching, whom we waited here.

Ceo. Go swiftly to my troops: let them attend
Without delay. I will inform the Dane
Of what we purpose, that he be prepar'd
To hasten, with the Irish, from this station,
While we, for present safety, take their office.

[*Exit Vassal.*

SCENE II.

Ceoluph. To him, enter Dane.

Dane. I learn, my lord, 'twas thy desire to see me:
And hence am come.

Ceo. I sought this conference,
'Tis true; and my intention was to tell thee
We need no longer the attendance, Dane,
Of thee, or of the Irish; will dispense
In future with thy care of this our charge,
And see, that 'tis dispos'd of as shall suit
The common cause.

Dane. I dive not to thy meaning.
Hast thou authority, my lord, to make
This change? Canst thou produce our general's orders?

Ceo. The authority by which, to guard this spot,
Late conducted thee, I now exert,
Requiring thy departure.

Dane. If, as then,
Thou canst assure me of the chief's consent,

(Whom only I obey) I shall at once
Confess my right now to resign my trust,
And thine as doubtful, to succeed to it.
Till this, it may not be.

Ceo. And dost thou think
The Danes who, for the welfare of their tribes,
Invited my assistance, will pronounce me
So useless now, and of such small account,
That my exertions for the common cause
Must be prescrib'd by peasants?

Dane. To nought else,
Proud lord, but to the general and his rules
Did I expect obedience at thy hands.
This contumelious style thou hast assum'd,
Hadst thou but known and weigh'd the esteem I
boast,
Might have appear'd less wise.

Ceo. I see thy purpose;
'Tis to create delays, and, with this band
Of false auxiliaries, beneath thy orders,
Expect the proper moment of desertion;
But, ere 'tis long, thy precious charge, rely on't,
Shall be securely plac'd beyond thy power.

Dane. Unmanner'd lord, I will not vie with thee
In base scurrility; but, be assur'd,

r thou, nor any other, with loud words
n daunt me from my duty: that, I trust,
which my honour is the pledge, is safe.

SCENE III.

Ceoluph, Dane. To them, enter the Soldiers of Ceoluph.

Ceo. 'Tis only known by proof.
Dane. I shrink not from it.
[*Ceoluph goes hastily towards the cottage, the Dane following, who prevents his entrance. A struggle ensues at the door, during which Ceoluph draws his sword and wounds the Dane. He, being struck, staggers towards the front of the stage, against a tree.*]

SCENE IV.

Ceoluph, Dane, English Soldiers. To them, enter Elsitha, and Edmund running out before her.

Els. What causes this dispute? if we, by chance,
Should be the subject of your conference,

Perhaps, by our compliance, we might give
To both content. Alas! good Dane, thou bleed'st.

SCENE V.

Elsitha, Edmund, Ceoluph, Dane, E. Soldiers. To them, enter the Irish as lookers on.

Ceo. [*seizing Edmund.*] This is my prize.
Els. O spare my child!
[*swoons, and is carried in by some Irish.*

SCENE VI.

Edmund, Ceoluph, Dane; E. Soldiers, I. Soldiers.

Dane. [*advancing.*] Mark, soldiers,
Maim'd as I am, how, in so fair a cause,
I now unsheath this sword, and bid you follow
To save our honour from this lawless lord.
He, by these insults, on the Danish name
Would cast foul stains, and, our reputed friend,
Would trample on our discipline; but you

Know better, as I trust, the brave man's duty,
Than to see wrested forcibly away
What is confided to us.

Ceo. Shew too, you
My faithful troops, ye are not aw'd by those
Who, under the false garb of law and order,
Ensure rebellion.

[*The Irish furiously charge Ceoluph's Soldiers, rescue Edmund, and form a circle round him.*

Ceo. Ye now boast success;
But ere your plots are ripe, one, at your cost,
Shall come to mar them, whose authority
Ye may perhaps allow.

[*Exeunt Ceoluph and E. Soldiers.*

SCENE VII.

Edmund, Dane, I. Soldiers.

Dane. Let one invite
The attendants back. I cannot think the general
(At least when he has listen'd to my counsel)
Would here exact this unavailing harshness.

Those shall approach the prisoners, whose attend-
ance
Use has made grateful; so ye fail not, soldiers,
To watch and guard them with due vigilance.
Go, and remember. [*Exeunt I. Soldiers.*

SCENE VIII.

Edmund, Dane.

Dane. Here, young prince, remain,
Where thou art safe, and need'st no longer fear
The sight of strangers. [*Exit Dane.*

SCENE IX.

Edmund. To him, enter Attendants.

1 *Off.* [*to the Attendants.*] When he joins his
troops,
Towards whom he goes, the Dane will soon per-
ceive

A spirit less devoted to his cause
Than he expects. They all resent this insult
On so esteem'd a leader, whose persuasion
Alone preserv'd the Danes their loyalty.
For so 'tis said. One cannot read their purpose;
But they aver, that to defend the queen
And prince from harm, their lives are readiest offerings.

2 *Off.* Then may Lord Ceoluph's return, with proof
Of the Dane's countenance to these his measures,
Be their immediate signal of revolt.

1 *Off.* 'Tis not unlikely; and we soon may see
Where tend their doubtful murmurs. So, young prince,
Thou wast involv'd, 'tis said, in a strange scene
Of tumult and confusion, which, I doubt not,
Surpass'd whatever thou had'st known before.
Yet are we glad that, through the aid of Heaven,
We now may give thee joy of the escape.
But how is this? thou'lt be a warrior, prince;
Thou art unterrified.

Edm. [*running towards the harp, and sounding it.*] O yes.

1 *Off.* What, prince!

Why dost thou draw thy hand across that harp?

Edm. Did we not beat them?

1 *Off.* Beat them! yes, you did.

Edm. O, I remember that my father us'd
To play upon his harp the songs of Ossian,
Who went to battle, fought, and, when return'd,
Would sing so nobly of the deeds he saw,
That, after he had done, I ask'd my father
When he would let me have a sword and spear,
And take me with him to the wars. [*to the harper.*
Pray tell me,
Canst thou not sing so too?

1 *Off.* 'Tis, be assur'd,
What the queen's illness recommends. Yes, raise
Some song of triumph, cheerful in its strains,
While I convey to her, without delay,
The important tidings of congenial sort
Our alter'd state permits. This too were useful.

[*Exit* 1 *Officer into the cottage.*

SCENE X.

Edmund, Attendants.

SONG.

That harp, with Scotland's praise of old
Enchanting, o'er the festive hall,
Where Ossian sate, the amaze of all,
Now Britain's undistinguish'd deeds to unfold,
Wakes sweetly, at the poet's call.
"Bless'd be the day," he sings, "the auspicious day,
When strong resistance curb'd our foes;
When, seen conspicuous o'er his vanquish'd clay,
The funeral mound of Hubba rose.

"Ye waves, that lash the lofty shore
Whence his returning squadron flew,
Ye might not Britain's virtue view
Alone; but from the grots of ocean hoar,
Far, far remote, on labour new
Intent, her chief obscur'd in base attire
His warlike limbs, and bore the charms

Of music to the haunt of licence dire,
That fury throng'd with adverse arms.

Pleas'd at his mirthful mood, and pleas'd
At his soft harp's bewitching tone,
While he each secret spies unknown,
The warriors cherish the sweet bane, that eas'd
The heart of care; yet, threat'ning shewn,
Soon shall his myriads leave the forest-glade.
Near valour, bursting from the bands
Of faint despondence, with resistless aid
Obedient faith still ready stands."

O realm of ever-living strains,
Thus round thy lakes of Britain sings
Some bard, nor shall the slumbering strings
Pass silently the future wreaths she gains,
Or sway'd by one, or many kings;
Nor shall her sons of glory want their praise;
With arms, or counsels, skill'd from wrong
To guard a state, or trace the doubtful ways
Of science, or sustain the song.

SCENE XI.

dmund, Attendants. To them, re-enter 1 *Officer.*

2 *Off.* How fares the queen?
1 *Off.* Recover'd from the effect
Of her long trance so lately, she appears
As one insensible to what is said.
Yet have I left the tidings, well assur'd
They quickly will restore her drooping spirits.
2 *Off.* The door is mov'd. Can it denote her coming?

SCENE XII.

dmund, Attendants. To them, enter Elsitha very weak, leaning on Editha, from the cottage.

Els. No sooner did I catch the sounds that told
Something of what had pass'd, than straight I flew
To learn it all. Ah! I perceive 'tis so.

Good folks, I thank you much, if it was you
That sav'd my child.

1 *Off.* Princess, we have besides
A cause of farther joy; our present hopes—

Els. Talk not to me of hope: that is for others.
Once I, too, hop'd, but long calamity
And frequent disappointment prov'd it vain.—
Alas! my strength endures not this exertion,
And I am faint. Conduct me, worthy friend,
Back to the cottage.—[*to Edmund.*] Thou canst aid to raise,
If aught can, from her present feeble state,
Thy mother: come, and cheer me with thy looks.
[*he runs to Elsitha and leans fondly upon her.*
[*to Editha.*] Support my steps. [*looking on Edmund.*] Do not stir from me, child.
[*Exeunt Elsitha, Editha, and Edmund into the cottage.*

SCENE XIII.

Attendants.

1. *Sold.* [*without.*] Long live King Alfred!

1 *Off.* These are sounds which rate

ur fortune far superior to our hopes.
What may they mean?

SCENE XIV.

Attendants. To them, enter Mervin, and I. Soldiers.

1 *Off.* Prince, we rejoice to see thee,
However unexpected, join us here.
Merv. Summon'd in Alfred's venerated name,
At length the Irish own their ancient friends,
And have surrender'd to our force the prisoners.
A guard sufficient will, without delay,
Transport you to the place you sought before,
Far from the neighbourhood of war and danger.
1 *Off.* 'Tis fortunate the Dane could not prevent
Their just submission.
Merv. Faithful to his trust,
He long endeavour'd; but the love they bore him
Only avail'd to stipulate such favour
As we were no less forward to allow.
He has his freedom,
1 *Off.* We obey thy orders.

Merv. Then hasten your departure. Go, since now
There is no hindrance.

1 *Off.* [*looking behind the scenes.*] Yet that new appearance
Which cross'd my sight this moment, scarcely proves it.

Merv. [*looking the same way.*] Who is the chief that yonder seems with threats,
With a loud voice, and wild impetuous gestures,
To parley with our troops, ranged farthest off?

1 *Off.* 'Tis Ceoluph, that treacherous lord; who went
From hence just now, to seek the Danish general,
And authorize undue severity,
By his consent, on those he, raving here,
Entitled rebels. By the fate of war,
He finds them distant, and returns alone
To wreak his vengeance on them. Led by thee,
We shall not fear a trial of our strength.

Merv. No; the adjustment of this difference rests
On us two only. No more blood be spill'd!

1 *Off.* Prince, do not hazard, without need, thy person,

or slight our ready aid.

Merv. I charge you, stay.

[*draws his sword, and exit.*

SCENE XV.

Attendants, and I. Soldiers.

1 *Off.* The event will be a source of general sorrow
o all the army, should it be perceiv'd,
this brave prince's death, unfortunate:
is ardent valour, and the abhorrence felt
clear integrity, at darkest baseness,
e the resistless prompters of his rage.
may the vigour which they lend his arm
mmand success!

2 *Off.* Thou heard'st their clashing swords?

1 *Off.* Perhaps from thence thou mayst discover somewhat
this momentous battle.

2 *Off.* Scarce I see them:
e drooping foliage so impedes my view,
d now a rapid impulse carries them

Behind the thickest shade.

1 *Off.* Advance, and mark them.

2 *Off.* [*going, stops.*] That is the prince, most surely, who appears
With signs of agitation, and directs
Hither his course.

1 *Off.* May it bode good!

SCENE XVI.

Attendants, I. Soldiers. To them, enter Mervin.

Merv. I bring you
The news, that Alfred hither leads in haste
His earnest bands, though I fear the cause
Is ill success; whose mournful signs are witness'd
In general flight. Our doubt will shortly cease.

SCENE XVII.

Mervin, Attendants, I. Soldiers. To them, enter Alfred, and E. Soldiers.

Alf. Prince, thus surrounded, as thou art, by foes.

What am I to suppose? Thou, surely, hast not
Fall'n by the fate of battle in their power;
But if thou have, my ready arms shall strive,
With English valour's aid, to wrest thee from them.

Merv. No, Alfred; they are friends, not foes, thou seest,
Who vie with Englishmen in acts of valour.

Alf. Such new society might raise, in some,
A doubt, if thou, prince, art become our foe;
Or rather those, more fortunately friends,
Who lately warr'd against us. But thy faith
In me prevents it.

Merv. Lo! a proof of this.

SCENE XVIII.

Alfred, Mervin, Attendants, I. and E. Soldiers. To them, enter Ceoluph wounded, brought in by Vassal, and others.

Alf. How shall I praise thee, gallant prince, enough?
Yes, 'tis a noble proof—

They carry Ceoluph towards the cottage, according to their intention of entering it, and one who precedes is about to open the door.

But see, his hand
Rais'd up, as if to warn them he would speak.
Ceo. [*in a despairing voice.*] No; stir not far-
ther—set me down—my wound
Asks sudden rest; and while I yet retain
Life's lessening remnant, anxiously I seek
To put it all to profit.
Vass. If, my lord,
Thy purpose be to summon to the attack
Our troops, how great soe'er king Alfred's force
We stand prepar'd—
Ceo. [*in the same tone.*] My purpose was n
such:
Let them approach him, but exhibit looks
Of meek submission, not of fierce defiance;
And to forgiveness of that breach of faith,
Of which I solely was the unworthy cause,
Waken his mercy. Let them too (and say
My counsel is the richest legacy
A chieftain could bequeath them) ever shun
The paths that lead to treason. Senseless hate,
And senseless envy of superior rank,
Be banish'd from their breast. Let them n
think
That gain is happiness, nor, for its gifts,

ope plunder in rebellion. Let them, too,
eware of those, who, by the lure of reason,
Would draw them to destruction. Nay, and urge
them
y'n to distrust their own self-counsell'd thoughts,
ompting precarious change.

Vass. My lord, I will.

Ceo. 'Tis thus my faithful troops may satisfy
heir conscience, and their God—I can no more!
y'n now I feel a sudden faintness warn
y end approaches fast, and from my veins
he life-blood issuing with a swifter flow,
eaves cold these torpid limbs—O injur'd mo-
narch—
eav'n speed him, and have mercy on my—Oh!
[*dies.*

Alf. 'Tis o'er. Ye vassals of the unhappy lord,
ar hence the body, and, with decent rites
et it be honour'd. To yourselves I grant
ee pardon. Go, let his judicious counsel
nk in your souls, and prove your future guide.
[*Exeunt with the body.*

SCENE XIX.

Alfred, Mervin, Attendants, E. and I. Soldiers.

Alf. Thy service, prince, is now again desir'd
And for the public cause, I would to thee
Entrust a message.
Merv. Readily I take
The office, Alfred, though the unwelcome task
Be to give sanction to disgraceful terms
Of peace, as conquer'd, with the haughty foe.
Alf. Then listen to what terms I grant the
Danes:
Pent, as they are, within yon distant castle,
In lessen'd numbers, and with humbler spirit-
Merv. Repeat thy words. What! have
gain'd the day?
Alf. Yes, never Alfred has beheld, till now,
His power so firmly fix'd, or stretch'd so wide
Over this beauteous isle. The king of Scotland
The prudent Gregory, for his country's good,
Had wisely sought protection from our own,
And sent his brave auxiliars to the war,

s subject to our sway. Since which event,
lmost the sovereignty of Britain's mine.

Merv. Almost!—'tis quite: I hail thee king
of Britain.

Alf. This cannot be. Thou, for thy state, I
know
ost homage; but thy brother Anarawd,
ho rules the territory of Northern Wales,
ong persever'd to hinder it, and from us
ithheld his aid in the destructive war
he Danes and we have waged; yet 'twere, in
truth,
hat both our interests alike requir'd.

Merv. Then will they meet no farther op-
position.
he Danish fleet, that hover'd round his coast,
eld him in awe, and to this cause is ow'd
e involuntary silence he preserves,
d has regretted long. On thy success,
ommission'd secretly from him I speak,)
holds himself from henceforth, and his king-
dom
bjected to thy mild and just dominion.

E. Sold. Long live great Alfred, the first king
of Britain!

Merv. Prepar'd to take thy message, I attend
The instruction of thy tongue. What punishment
Does Alfred mean to award to lawless bands,
Who long have wasted every fertile plain;
And mark'd their steps with blood?

Alf. Such punishment
As Christian justice asks.

Merv. Speak then; what is it?

Alf. Different degrees of favour must be shewn,
To various worth.

Merv. 'Twere worthy Alfred's wisdom.

Alf. Then, since our mild religion teaches us
To love, and to forgive our enemies,
I shall not hesitate. To every Dane
I grant his liberty.

Merv. His liberty?

Alf. And to all those who will embrace our faith,
And leave their pagan gods, to such I give
Sufficient lands, with honest industry,
Spread through the middle counties of our realm,
To thrive in peace.

Merv. So merciful a conduct,
Was oft thy noble policy; but now,

While prostrate at thy feet the foe is seen,
And 'tis no longer needful, dost thou hold
The deed is wise?

Alf. 'Tis just, and therefore wise.

Merv. I swiftly bear these tidings, which will soon
O'ercome their minds with unexpected goodness;
And, if I augur right, no truer subjects
Their gratitude will leave to upbraid their honour.
[*Exit.*

SCENE XX.

Alfred, Attendants, E. and I. Soldiers.

Alf. You, men of Ireland, rest protected here,
While our subjects, till the Danish force,
Enfeebled now by this our victory,
Rouze your brave countrymen to free themselves
From an oppressive yoke. In after times
I trust the nations will preserve with care
Their ancient friendship, and all foreign lands
Envy the fortune of the British Isles.

I. Sold. Long live great Alfred, patron of the Irish!

E. and I. Sold. May Irishmen and Britons seem one people!

Alf. Our triumph to complete, it yet remains
That we diffuse the gladness where 'tis due.
I hasten to the queen: do you meanwhile
Resign yourselves to joy, nor let the harp
Speak of aught else but Britain's future glory.

[*Exit into the cottage.*

SCENE XXI.

Attendants, E. and I. Soldiers.

SONG.

Slow descending from the plains
Of liquid ether, and the peopled sky,
The converse of the bless'd resign'd,
Daughters of peace, th' inventive arts from high
Glance sweet on their remember'd earth.
Floating on colour'd clouds, they seek, inclin'd,
What guardian spirit, whence he reigns,

With beck'ning hand, permitted from above,
And voice exulting, bade them speed,
Round whom himself, and powers aerial love,
(To win the noblest realm decreed)
Their blessings wide t' extend, and wake their
fruits to birth.

Heavenly harbingers of joy,
Come, and below, enchanting nearer, smile,
Stor'd with the secret skill ye boast
Or wealth t' improve, or poverty beguile:
Come; and the trackless desert sow
With autumn's waving pride; but o'er the coast
Let commerce all her sons employ
T'adorn, with glories of remotest lands,
Wide cities, your stupendous work.
For all things own, with well-instructed hands,
Each others aid, ye grant to lurk
Unprais'd no genuine charm, no labour useless
grow.

Not the thought-inspiring stream
Of fam'd Ilyssus, nor the sage's bowers;
Not Tibur's banks your steps attend;
'Twas Britain's Genius, from the bordering
flowers

Of limpid Thames that call'd so long
Your radiant beauty, where in pride ascend
Augusta's towers, and neighbouring gleam;
Or verdant paths divide the elms of Shene,
Or forests clothe the winding-shore.
What splendour then shall raise the vivid scene,
When you refinement's gladness pour,
And virtue wider blooms around th' expecting throng.

1 *Off.* I wonder what the intentions of the king
Are in this weighty matter, which must soon
Engage us, the formation of a state.
All who survive the battle of this day
Expect, I doubt not, here, upon the field,
Some declaration of important kind.

2 *Off.* It must be so; for, ere the fight began,
'Tis said, he, with the hopes of liberty,
Of new and better laws, to fortify,
And to extend our rights, inspir'd their courage.
What it may be, I guess not; if we credit
The voice of rumour, he intends to lay
Such privileges down, secur'd by law,
As common virtue scarcely could resign.

1 *Off.* 'Tis safer to distrust those wandering tales;

He means us good, but we shall see, if now
A youthful monarch at his reign's first outset,
Dare liberate subjects from undue dependence,
And give an earnest of regard to freedom.

SCENE XXII.

Attendants E. and I. Enter Alfred, Elsitha, recovered, but pale, and Edmund.

Alf. Soldiers and friends, the toil of battle past,
'Tis now our business elsewhere to seek forth
Some better place of rest; so long condemn'd
To bear the weather's worst inclemencies,
Or find, at most, in some half ruin'd hovel,
Or hut, a shelter from the raging storm,
Each will be lodg'd beneath his roof again,
And mansions which the Danes have long possess'd
Are open to receive us; there repose
Will be as just as welcome; and yet now
Activity becomes us, and a work
Of lasting import asks the nation's efforts;
Nor shall I shrink from toil, or sacrifice
Of rights, in this revision of our laws.

Oft in discourse ye hear of my intentions;
What ye were told do I confirm; and promise
To make you those concessions: on their base
(Destin'd, I hope, to be the pride of man)
The British constitution shall arise,
And may it last till time shall be no more!

[*They look on each other in admiration. The English, Scots, Welch, and Irish following in procession, in their respective arms and dresses,*

[*Exeunt omnes.*

NOTES.

Page 41. *Think but of one Rome's sages, &c.*] Cicero's praise of this form of government is known, and Tacitus, though speaking in the style of objection, condemns it only as a fine theory, which had attracted the attention of philosophers, but was impossible to reduce to practice.

Page 48. *When Arthur fill'd the island throne.*] "Arthur, provoked to see the little advantage he had yet gained, and that victory yet continued in suspense, drew out his Caliburn, and calling upon the name of the Blessed Virgin, rushed forward with great violence into the thickest of the enemy's ranks; of whom (such was the merit of his prayers) not one escaped alive that felt the fury of his sword."

Geoffery of Monmouth.

Page 48. *Chiefs prostrate lie.*] Catalina vero longe a suis, inter hostium cadavera, repertus est, paulum etiam spirans, ferociamque animi, quam habuerat vivus, in vultu retinens. *Sall. Bell. Cat.*

This is still more closely imitated by Rucelai in his Rosmunda, in the following lines:—

E morto ritenea quella fierezza
Ch'avea quand'era vivo, e quell'orrore.

Page 48. *For toils like these.*] Hac arte Pollux, hac vagus Hercules. *Hor.*

Page 49. *Their names alike, (if such be praise.*] Ossaque nomen Hesperiâ in magnâ, si qua est ea gloria, signant. *Virg.*

Page 86. *Nor shall her sons of glory.*] "Thy sons of glory many." See Thompson, in his Summer; to whose patriotism, displayed in the rest of the paragraph, this fiction of Ossian's harp alludes.

Page 102. *Winding-shore.*] The ancient name of Windsor.

OETICAL MISCELLANIES.

INCLUDING

TRANSLATIONS

FROM

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CONTENTS.

		PAGE
The Squire's Tale	- -	27
Imitation of Persius's sixth Satire	-	52
Odes - - - -		66
Elegy - - -		80
Sonnets - - - -		86
Epigrams - - - -		89
Translations.	*Petrarch, Part I.* -	98
———	*Petrarch, Part II.* -	132
———	*The Twelfth Pythian Ode of Pindar* - -	139
———	*Latin Ode by Gray* -	142
———	*Latin Ode by the same* -	145

PREFACE.

THE following Poems which are, in effect, though not strictly speaking, all now published for the first time, are, in different ways, the produce of that leisure which, though coming unsought for by the lover of literature, tends equally to multiply proofs of the natural bias of his mind. Part of them are much to be attributed to the occasions which apparently called them forth; but the generality (especially the translations from originals written in the ancient languages) are owing also, more or less decidedly, to a desire I had of exemplifying some points of criticism, and of possessing a sort of memorial of those judgments, which the pursuits I was engaged in had from time to time led me to form. As these opinions, therefore, bear rather a close relation to the poems, collectively considered, I conceive that to refer to the

former, in treating of the latter, will not only be thought sufficiently to the purpose; but that by affording new matter of reflection, it will seem to apologize to the reader for calling his attention twice to the same compositions.

Before I specify any one in particular, I have only to observe concerning them all, that a finished and correct style has been attempted, perhaps in some respects successfully; and that the example of certain innovations in the structure of the verse, and in the form of the expression (though I cannot say that they have *yet* prevailed generally) has been diligently guarded against. Instances of these are first, where an affected or improper stress is laid upon the third syllable in the verse; as if it began in this manner:

The glad beam brightens——

Our Iambic, indeed, allows a degree of stress to be laid upon the third syllable, which often improves the effect. We find in every page verses like,

Of man's first disobedience——

And,

In these deep solitudes——

And Pope likewise cautiously, and where the sense

upports him, introduces verses running in the anner even of the first of these three examples; as,

The green reed trembles, and the bulrush nods.

Another mode of poetical expression, novel when s frequent and marked use is taken into consi-eration, is where the verb precedes the nominative ase. The best poets have likewise used this, es-ecially where the freedom of blank verse gave it reater propriety. We may bear possibly,

Resounds the living surface of the ground;

ut it seems used in such instances as the *ne plus ltra* of poetical licence. From the remarks here ade, the public will judge whether the desire I ve shewn is commendable, that poets writing in yme should be called back to the versification d phraseology of Pope and Dryden.

The Squire's Tale may perhaps be considered Chaucer's principal poem. In modernizing it, I ve adhered more closely to the original than has en heretofore the custom in this species of writ-g; though I have deviated somewhat more from than, in my opinion at least, would suit the cha-cter of mere translation. A few copies of a pub-

lication containing the present poem, the imitation of Persius, and one of the translations that follow it, have gone into the world; and a Reviewer has perceived something forced in the connection between these three compositions. But it certainly had an object; which was to exhibit the distinct characters of three modes of writing, visibly allied to each other. Whether to modernize, be any thing more than to translate imperfectly; whether he who professes to invent at all, ought not to rely much on himself; and whether the success of some poets may not have recommended a route of fancy to others, who, possessing less dexterity, might more wisely refrain from following their steps; I do not pretend to determine: but it appears to be esteemed more necessary to render the precise thought of the original, in translating a standard author, such as, for instance, one of the classics, than in shewing the ideas of those ill-fated geniuses, whose style is destined to become obsolete, clothed in the language of the day. It has been usual, in doing this, not only to add, and to omit, but even to alter the plan of the poem. And perhaps, where the object is merely to exhibit instances of the poetry of an

obscure age, or an inferior poet, this mode of composition may have its use (though certainly this end would be, if less easily, yet more perfectly attained by translation). But I have been fearful of violating the respectable relics of the father of English poetry; and indeed, when it is observed how paraphrastically this poem has been, among the rest, modernized, in the collection of the Canterbury Tales published by Ogle, the reverential regard for them I have discovered, in departing so little both from the general and particular sense of the original passages, will appear in a stronger light. With a very few alterations and additions, my poem perhaps might become a translation; that is to say, belong, I think, to a more valuable kind of composition.

If this poem be of a kind that does not deserve so much to be said in its praise, as translation, that which follows is of a different one, and which unites the restraint, and consequent difficulty of translation, with at least as much opportunity for original thought as the other. The name of Imitation may have discredited it in the opinion of many, being by Horace, in one instance, connected with the idea of servility: but if we estimate the task it imposes on

the poet, who meets all its difficulties, by multiplying those parallelisms which form its essence, to the degree which its nature requires, and to a greater than they have yet been multiplied; and by letting no proper name, nor interesting passage in the author imitated, be passed over, without providing others of equal consequence to match them with; we may be induced to allow, that it would require in him some compass of thought at once to do this, and to do it to the satisfaction of his readers. Though in the best writings of this sort there may be discovered powers which have grasped more objects, and thereby shewn the all-sufficiency of genius, they have not taken in every one of these, nor derived every possible advantage from art. And unless such inventive powers are perceivable in this looser kind of Imitation, that will appear which ought never to do, and which renders the sort of composition faulty which I have just censured; namely, that the author who cultivates it, does so merely to save himself labour, and to benefit by the labour of others. But the Imitation is no excrescence of literature, bestowing upon him who first produced it a praise unreasonably claimed

as has sometimes happened. The use of it will, on the contrary, be evident, when we consider how peculiar and distinct it is from every other literary labour, and what an inexhaustible source of variety the lapse of time provides for it, by the private and public events of all sorts which must in future happen. The same satire that is imitated, in one century, in ever so good a manner, may in the next be furnished with new characters and events, in order to form as good, or, possibly, better parallelisms. For these reasons, I think that when Johnson said this "was a kind of middle composition between translation and original design," he said too little in its favour. Though the qualities it requires may not be all of them equal in dignity to all that are called forth in composing an epic poem, yet it admits of genuine eloquence and true poetry, and allows the display of the utmost degree of originality.

The same writer, considering this subject in an historical view, attributes the invention to either Oldham or Rochester; but says no more. Now if he is right, it appears to me almost demonstrable, from the different ages of the poets, as well as from

the dates of the composition and publication of their poems, that the honour of it is due to Rochester. If it be so, certainly his time has been by few other things so profitably employed. The honour appears the greater, when we read Johnson's remark, or rather candid confession, that "perhaps few Imitations will be found, where the parallelism is better preserved," than in his Imitation of Horace on Lucilius.

Among the odes there is one which formed a chorus in the first edition of the Battle of Eddington. I thought it did not sufficiently adhere to the rule in Horace, forbidding

> Quod non proposito conducat et hereat apte.
>
> —— Odes between the acts, that seem
> *Unapt*, or foreign to the general theme. COLMAN.

I likewise thought the correspondence of the rhyme might not be sufficiently perceptible. Yet I recollect a wish I at the same time made, that the rage for novelty would spend itself upon rhymes, instead of altering the simplicity of language. Except the ode now republished, every thing that I could all wish recommended to attention in the first, w

e found in the second edition of the Battle of Eddington.

Upon the subject of Elegy, which a poem in that ne leads me next to consider, I by no means, I elieve, differ singly in opinion with that unequal ough valuable critic, Dr. Johnson, where he eats of the metre * proper for it; and observes, at "the quatrain of ten syllables" has not an egiac character, and was thought by Dryden to e the most sonorous of all metres. It may be said answer, that Dryden had not seen its effect ied; that, at least, such an elegy as the Country hurchyard was not in existence to manifest it; d that the elegy may in a degree be sonorous. t that in any metre pauses may be so contrived to vary the effect, blank verse in the hands of fferent poets will prove. If, in this metre, ac-rdingly, the pauses are not sufficiently often at close of the lines, the more irregular structure these, may take from the calmness and solemnity cessary for elegy, and produce an effect similar that perceived by Dryden; though his example adopting this metre has not been followed by sub-

* Life of Hammond.

sequent poets in the epic line. Shenstone observed, "the public ear, habituated of late to a quicker measure, may perhaps consider this as heavy and languid; but an objection of that kind may gradually lose its force, if this measure should be allowed to suit the nature of elegy." Whatever may be the cause, whether custom or its own merits, this metre now seems generally preferred in elegy. And in either case it may be preferred justly: for even supposing the advantages of one sort of verse over another to be in a great measure imaginary, and habit and custom the chief recommendations of any; yet the peculiarity of this tends to distinguish this species of poetry in a degree proportionable to its dignity, and thus to arrange our literature in a more beautiful and convenient manner.

In order to enforce his argument, Johnson represents "gentleness and tenuity" as the character of the elegy. The works of Tibullus are certainly much marked with this character; but I do not know whether this is allowed to be a full description of it. M. de Marmontel observes there are three sorts of elegy; that of Tibullus, or the tender

hat of Propertius, or the impassioned; and that f Ovid, or the graceful and elegant *(gracieux)*. he elegy of Gray is marked with calmness, but ot with the qualities Johnson mentions; which ardly consist with that philosophical dignity, and ose solemn, and even sublime ideas, which prevail many parts of it. The same critic, who was not ruck with Shenstone's argument abovementioned, ncerning metre, sufficiently to discuss it, never- eless praises his notion * of the nature of elegy; hich he describes to be "the effusion of a con- mplative mind, sometimes plaintive, and always rious, and therefore superior to the glitter of false naments." This seems a more complete charac- of it than the other; though, if we judge of gy by the remains of the ancient elegiac poets, d by Horace's account of it in these lines;

Versibus impariter junctis querimonia primum
Post etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos;

Couplets unequal were at first confined
To speak in broken verse the mourner's mind;
Prosperity at length, and free consent,
In the same numbers gave their raptures vent;

COLMAN.

* Life of Shenstone.

we shall not think invariable seriousness necessary to it. But we have perhaps adhered more closely than the later ancients, to the primary idea of elegy. We might not, for instance, rank as belonging to it such a poem as the beautiful one of Tibullus on Sulpicia. And it seems, indeed, that poetical lamentation is capable of calling forth the peculiar beauties of each of the three Roman poets. But we permit elegy to exceed its limits so much, that "thoughtfulness" may as truly as any thing be called its character, though the derivation of the name, and its original office, may bias us to prefer "grief" to it. For our elegy either displays particular, or general grief, in other words, melancholy, which produces a thoughtfulness and regularity of style, and requires a verse adapted to itself. But even in such verse any thing light or sportive, as in the poem on Sulpicia, hardly seems to us elegiac, unless we superadd some cause of grief, though equally light and sportive. And this is the nature of the poem which gave occasion to these reflections.

The Sonnet, though of modern invention, has engaged the attention of Boileau, and other critics.

It has been, and is still in different countries often employed in celebrating trifling occurrences, which form proper subjects for occasional verses, but do not admit of much of the spirit of poetry; but I must confess I am most struck with the opinions of those who consider it as a species of elegy. It seems to me, full as much as elegy, equal to a display of the pomp of numbers: and I have often admired the grandeur of its march, with its attendant rhymes. It seems to have been well employed, as it has lately been, in describing particular places; especially when some interesting event of past times has happened in a beautiful spot: for this is a proper subject for elegy. The sonnet is too, by its brevity, fitted for the traveller, who is always on the point of visiting some new place, and receiving new impressions that will efface the old ones. It is calculated to express a single and general elegiac sentiment, before other thoughts connected with it have been suggested by the subject; and as there is the greater unity where the composition is not held together by transitions, and forms itself only one sentiment, the close relation of its parts by means of rhyme, seems to en-

force this unity, as well as to distinguish the sort of poem. Boileau thinks repeated rhyme so necessary to the sonnet, that he makes that its definition, though he gives no reason for its necessity.

As the translations are principally from Petrarch, and both in considerable number, and selected upon a regular plan, I think it necessary to mention, that a great part of these are owing to a cause superadded to that stated in the beginning of the Preface. Having been obliged by my affairs to reside some years in a country at a great distance from my own, and having settled myself in a romantic retirement, not far from a considerable city; I found, in my situation, so whimsical a resemblance to that of the poet, that this, together with his fondness for descriptions of rural solitude, first induced me to think of translating some of his poems. But after I returned home it occurred to me, in reading the Memoires de Petrarque, not only that a difficulty I had supposed in literature might be surmounted, but that I might, without much additional labour, effect that desirable purpose. To translate all of Petrarch must be allowed, by those

who have read him, to be a task truly Herculean. This, therefore, was not to be thought of; but to form an interesting whole, of parts of his works properly selected, was attended by the difficulty which seemed deserving of an attempt to remove. A selection with a similar object had been made; but though praise is due to one or two publications of this sort that have appeared, yet a plan to answer every desirable end was yet unformed: and this will not be doubted, when it is considered that almost all those poems of Petrarch which eminent critics have esteemed his best, have been omitted by his translators. But in pursuing my design, I thought I saw, that I should not only make Petrarch known, but should also necessarily trace out a general plan of selection, which those who collect poems for publication might judge of, and see whether it was not an eligible mode of ridding the reader, and the writer, at such times, of poetry which may have already lived long enough, and which tends only to disappoint the one, and to mislead the other. A collection of poets might thus become a work, not very voluminous, and perhaps by means of one or two poems, some part of most of the poets would be preserved. My scheme was

founded upon this idea, that a composition became justly an object of attention, in an inferior degree, from its subject, as well as from its own excellence; so that as it is usual to preserve other poems besides those of the very greatest merit, it would be well to prefer such inferior ones as, by communicating some information, in a manner compensate for their deficiencies; and thus to make history unite with poetry for the instruction as well as the amusement of the reader. Agreeably to this method, I have chosen the order in which the poems are arranged by the author of the Memoires, being that in which he shews them to have been written, and different from that in which they have descended to us; and, as his work is formed upon the plan of a selection from Petrarch's writings, in order to let him be, as much as possible, his own historian; so the translations I have made are chiefly from a part only of those selected poems; that he may, in a general indeed and imperfect manner, but still as fully and as pleasingly as the poems alone will permit, be singly his own historian. With this view, I judged proper to translate first, those odes which have been esteemed, in different ways, the

masterpieces of Petrarch; secondly, just so much marked by his peculiar faults, as would enable me to shew the character of his style; and thirdly, whatever he wrote upon occasions that threw any light upon his life, excepting where the occasion was likely, either alone, or together with that quaintness and singularity of style he so often adopts, to make him too little interest either as a man or as a poet: for the same balance should be preserved between what is favourable and unfavourable in the character, represented by the verses, as in that which is collected from all the documents we are enabled to consult.

In undertaking this work, I was necessarily to be regulated by certain ideas I had formed of the nature of translation. I observed, the precept most frequently inculcated and dwelt upon was, that the translator ought to express his author's thoughts, in the same manner that he would have done, if writing in the same language. But as this manner cannot very readily be known, the precept, though intended to guard against that want of freedom, which very close translations frequently exhibit, may give too great a latitude to writers, who not

being enthusiastic lovers of art, are averse from that finish and exactness which its perfection, in principal points at least, requires. Where literal translation is faulty, it is not because it resembles the original too much, but (quite the contrary) because by a laboured resemblance of the words and sentences, the whole, including the spirit and manner, is even rendered the more unlike. The perfection of a translation would be that the words, spirit, and manner, should be exactly the same as in the original, and that there should be neither more nor less eloquence and harmony in the one than in the other. A translator is like a person who is sent out by some public body to travel into distant unexplored regions, in order to benefit his employers by new discoveries. If such a one deviate in any degree from the truth in the accounts he gives; if he introduce in his pictures a foreground, for the sake of embellishment, which could not have been in nature; or if he represent in them a striking assemblage of mountains, rocks, and torrents, where the country was of a tame and cultivated kind, he may furnish amusement, from his own imagination, to the purchasers of his book; but he

nnot be said to have acted consistently with the aracter he had assumed. So the translator is ound, to the utmost of his power, faithfully to re- esent the merits and demerits of the original. t it may happen that, with a little variation of e phrase, a resemblance may be obtained in the me and structure of the thought, and in the fect produced upon it by metre: however, this ght to be attempted with caution, nor ought the thor's sense to be either more expanded, or more mpressed, in the translation. It was with this w I chose stanzas exactly, I thought, of a proper gth to translate an alcaic ode, by which an glish stanza might be allotted to a Latin one ough the whole poem. But in modern lan- ages, in which metre depends upon rhyme, a rule ms to me to grow out of the nature of transla- n, possessing strong claims for regard. If one y, by observing the same order of rhymes, and gth of lines, convey to the reader instantaneous- an idea of the appearance the original makes the eye, why should one wantonly choose in ference different ones, and withhold a piece of tory of however small consequence from him?

This rule I have observed, in spite of the numerous rhymes, by which Petrarch has rendered it no slight task, even in his odes, which do not necessarily require a repetition of them.

There are, however, exceptions to this rule; for were the French tragedians to be translated, ought they to be translated in rhyme? certainly not: for an English tragedy in rhyme, is a defective composition, and therefore does not properly represent a French one in rhyme, which suits the genius of the language in which it is written.

There is something, nevertheless, to say on both sides, on the subject of the verse proper to translate an Italian epic poem: for, in the first place, the ottava-rima is not so disgusting in the epic as rhyme is upon our stage; and in the second, we are not ourselves determined, in spite of Milton's poem, whether rhyme or blank verse be proper for epic poetry; so that we are prepared, perhaps, to allow one advantage in the verse of Fairfax; namely, that it is an index of Italian manners.

The author of the Memoires very justly passes strictures upon the Sestina, as being of a species of writing without dignity, and not approving of a

hat Petrarch wrote, he has for that reason trans-
ted none. I perfectly agree with him in opinion
oncerning the degree of merit perceivable in the
estina, and for that reason, I should have follow-
d his example; but thinking that though the ori-
nal poet was only a poet, yet the translating poet
as likewise an historian, I have judged it right
give an example of one; as also to translate one
allad, and one madrigal: that every species of
riting found in Petrarch might have a place in
e collection.

The plan of translation is as little extended as it
uld well be, to answer the end I had proposed
yself. I was strongly tempted not to separate
om the famous ode at Laura's fountain, its sister
e. I would have added the three odes, called
e Graces, upon Laura's eyes; a subject that must
em the more natural, as the poet lived nearer
nes when "Bright eyes rain'd influence, and
dged the prize:" and that may, assisted by poeti-
l merit, furnish a sufficient instance of Petrarch's
culiarities, and yet compensate for their want of
easing effect. I would likewise have translated the
e on the Crusades, and that on the troubles of Italy.

With more time and labour, a more comprehensive plan might be struck out; such as to add those sonnets and other poems, by which, as well as by the poet's letters, his biographer shews the state of his mind at different times, with respect to his love, and how the behaviour of Laura, and other circumstances, operated upon it. After this, the mere English reader might be almost as well acquainted as he could hope to be with the writings of Petrarch.

The translation of the twelfth Pythian ode, (which its shortness, unity, and poetical spirit recommended,) was owing to an opinion I had formed, that consistently with the spirit of the rule I mentioned above, the strophe, antistrophe, and epode, might be used to translate out of a Greek lyric poet with remarkable propriety; but were improper for original poems in English. They may shew the style of writing formerly in Greece, just as the order of rhymes may shew that now in foreign countries; but when we recollect what strong reasons custom then furnished, for choosing stanzas so mutually connected, our spontaneous use of them, has in it something secondary and imitative. The stanzas ought certainly to correspond, but it is not

ecessary for this, that they should be of more than ne species, in an ode: and this accords with Gray's deas, who thought some of those in ternaries at too reat a distance from their corresponding ones.* tanzas with a less perceptible correspondence of he verses, seem vastly well to distinguish the reater from the lesser ode.

The Sapphic ode was chosen as one which had ot been yet translated, and which was strongly cha- cteristic of a favourite poet. I did not use a stanza f sufficient length fully to render a Sapphic stanza; d therefore erred against the rule, I since laid own for myself. This translation was owing to a dgment I had formed of the celebrated one of hilips, which made me observe one point in which adhered to nice propriety in this less essential part composition, and two in which he erred against The first was in his closing the first stanza th a short line, which has an affinity to the rminating verse in the original: the other two re, first, in his adopting afterwards a different e (which changed the ode improperly into an regular ode); and secondly, in his adopting one

* Mem. Sect. 4. Letter 20.

which, however much in use, seems hardly to deserve the name: for if the pause at the end of a series of lines be sufficient to produce the effect of a stanza, what occasion is there ever for any varied disposition of the rhymes? An ode made up of such stanzas may be said to be, in part, composed by the printer; in whose power it is frequently, by making its lines all equidistant, to convert it into a familiar epistle.

I have dwelt more upon these inferior considerations in composition, because there appears to exist some prejudice, especially in the drama, against a close attention to rules of criticism; as well as a seeming opinion, that good sense, simplicity, and universal correctness, are incompatible, instead of being naturally connected with higher qualities. As I have, in some Letters on the Drama, published last year, attempted to shew the difference between a minute and delicate taste, the former of which attaches the utmost consequence to trifling beauties, which it alone can relish, and the latter is just attracted by them from that excess of sensibility which renders it tremblingly alive to beauties of a higher sort, I shall only add, that

conceive my observations applicable to other kinds of writing also, and that even exact rhymes are, as far as they go, a recommendation to poetry when considered generally, and not in a particular instance. If the bad consequence of their restraint were, in any particular poem, to be made appear, they would be then, and by that poet, to be avoided. But however learned a critic may be, his judgments are not respectable, either of finished or unfinished composition, if he forms them by a cold reference to rules, without entering into its spirit, and thus prejudges the author. There are certainly instances of happy, negligent rhymes; and if the poet does not think he has facility enough to produce such as are unaccompanied by defects, he ought not when they occur to reject them. But no walk of genius is so respectable, that it makes any other despised. Though many painters shew undoubted talents in sketches, who, when they proceed to form finished pictures from them, gradually do away the effect they were able to produce; yet it is not their custom to inveigh against the use of colours. And if we look beyond the limits of the fine arts, we shall see that

a Cromwell, though he could not parcel out his thoughts in an admirable manner, in words, yet is allowed the character of a great man: but that we are not led, on this account, to hold in less esteem the impressive, though elaborate, eloquence of a Tully.

POETICAL MISCELLANIES.

THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

—— Call up him, that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung——
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career.

MILTON.

PART I.

In Sarra's city once, in Tartary, reign'd
A king, who war with Russia's tribes maintain'd;
By which there fell in arms, of splendid fame,
Full many a knight; Cambuscan was his name.

Far through the world his merits were renown'd,
And none, in aught, so excellent was found.
In various virtue kingly, as in birth,
He made his office honour'd through the earth.
Firm in the faith which he profess'd to hold,
Of wealth conspicuous, and as wise as bold;
Rigid in truth and justice, yet inclined
To soft compassion, and of nature kind;
His person comely, fortunate his doom,
So well could he the royal part assume,
So much his qualities the observer strike,
All own'd they never had beheld his like.

This Tartar without peer, this valiant king,
Saw its fair fruits from happy marriage spring;
The younger hope, by Elfeta, his wife,
Camballo call'd, the elder Algarsife.

He had, besides, the youngest of the three,
A daughter fair, whose name was Canace.
But, to pourtray the beauties of the maid,
In vain were aptest eloquence essay'd.
At least my language in the attempt were vain,
And matchless charms my pencil rude restrain
Whose full idea rhetoric must impart
Wit i glowing colours, and the stores of art.

'Tis mine, more humble than the skilful tribe,
Truly to speak, but plainly to describe.
It chanced, since first Cambuscan bore the sway,
When twenty winters now had pass'd away,
(As was, I deem, his custom every year)
He caused, through Sarra's streets, in accent clear,
A feast to be proclaim'd, whose lawful mirth
Might fitly celebrate his day of birth;
The appointed time, the last of March's ides.
Sol now, his station changed, with Mars resides,
Mounted in Aries, from whose angry sign
His burning beams with stronger influence shine.
Changed by his warmth, the temperate gales impart
Forgotten rapture to the cheerless heart:
And as the verdant hues more vivid grow,
Or cloudless skies the coming season show,
With shrillest melody the quires of air,
On wing, the abundance of their joy declare.
As if protections they had now obtain'd,
Nor fear'd his tyranny, though winter reign'd.
Presiding at the feast, Cambuscan bore
His crown aloft, and royal vestments wore,
Seen through the hall, at its exalted part,
And graced a banquet, plann'd with matchless art.

Of which to tell the order and array,
It sure would occupy a summer's day.
Nor could it add to my relation force,
To trace the plan of each succeeding course.
I to the narrative shall close adhere.
And so it chanced that while, the tables clear,
And, with its dainties, the third course removed,
The ravish'd king his minstrels' art approved,
In at the entrance was perceived to pass
A knight full sudden, on a steed of brass.
An ample mirror in his hand he held,
And on his finger was a ring beheld:
Unsheath'd beside him hung his shining sword,
Accoutred thus, he sought the royal board;
And, young and old in silence wondering, all,
Their eager eyes pursued him through the hall.
Full richly dress'd, this knight, unseen before,
All, save his head, with armour cover'd o'er,
King, queen, and lords, in order due, salutes;
And his expression so his subject suits,
That did old Gawain * come at our command,
And leave his residence in Fairy land,

* Nephew of King Arthur, and esteemed a model of *knightly courtesy.*

His courteous fancy could not mend a word.
For he, his preface o'er, his tale deferr'd;
But with a manly voice, and faultless speech,
Observant of the rules professors teach,
To suit our action to our changing phrase,
Enforced the impressive thoughts a thousand ways.
I do not hope to imitate his art,
But the mere matter of the harangue to impart.
He said, "Both India's and Arabia's king,
Whose gifts to you this solemn day I bring,
Not uninstructed 'tis your natal day,
Sends me his tribute of respect to pay.
On you this brazen steed has he bestow'd,
Which, with strange power, transports its living
" load,
Where'er commanded, in a day and night,
And safe through showers directs its rapid flight.
He, a sure safeguard in the realms of air,
Unharm'd will carry you through foul and fair:
Or should you wish your airy course to change,
And lofty regions, wing'd by eagles, range,
Not less securely would you cleave the skies,
(Though stealing sleep o'ercame your watchful
" eyes)

" While, when you chose, and rightly moved a pin,
" Your journey back would, undelay'd, begin.
" This shining mirror, which my hand sustains,
" Gives the rare privilege, with little pains,
" To see, reflected by its surface true,
" Each ill impending o'er your state and you;
" Reveal'd to see your real friend and foe,
" Nor less in love the turns of fortune know.
" If some bright lady of your court has borne
" Its tender pains, her lover late forsworn,
" This will detect, howe'er conceal'd it be,
" His fickle soul's dissembling subtlety.
" But that this mirror, and the mystic ring
" I bear, alike commission'd from the king,
" Another mark of his regard, be kept,
" He prays that Canace will these accept.
" This ring interprets, with the truth of words,
" Each meaning latent in the tones of birds;
" And, to their sense enlarged, conveys again
" Adapted language from the mouths of men.
" Whether the hand wear this, or purse contain,
" To such as rankling wounds oppress with pain,
" It points what aid the stores of nature yield,
" And shews each useful simple of the field.

" This naked sword, that glitters at my side,
To all were dreadful who its powers defied,
And irresistibly would pierce its stroke
Through mail, whose thickness match'd the
spreading oak.
Vain all attempts to heal the wound it made,
Till you shall o'er it gently draw the blade.
While yet the gifts by you possess'd remain,
Such various virtues shall they still retain."
Thus having spoke, the knight directs his steed
ck through the assembly, and alights with speed.
e steed, reflecting the refulgent beams,
nds in the court, and without motion seems:
e knight is led to a refreshing meal,
sed of the incumbrance of his coat of steel.
rsuant to his will, what presents may
e duly borne, and without toil, away:
e sword and mirror to a lofty tower;
Canace her ring, of equal power:
, sitting at the feast, receives the gift;
t none may hope the brazen horse to lift.
strength can, equal to the load, be found,
r crane, nor pulley, force it from the ground.
ey wait, as they must needs, the knight's return,
m him the secret, you shall hear, to learn.

Now mighty throngs, attracted by report,
To see the wondrous beast o'erspread the court,
Intently gazing, and discoursing much;
Such is his size, and his proportions such!
So well his height is suited to his length!
He seems with nags of Lombardy in strength
To vie, in briskness with the Apulian breed.
For 'tis, by each spectator near, agreed,
Nor art, nor nature can increase its store
Of excellence, nor add one beauty more.
But their conceptions far it did surpass
How it could move, and yet be made of brass.
That 'twas a fairy work to some it seem'd;
But different some its origin esteem'd.
The notions, bandied in discourse by these,
Sounded like murmurs from a swarm of bees.
They love the tales they read of to rehearse,
And talk of Pegasus, described, in verse,
Like him to spurn the ground, and cleave the air:
Or 'twas the horse of Sinon, they declare,
By wicked demons to this day preserved,
To make them feel the fortune Troy deserved.
Some on the wondrous things their comments made,
Shewn by that mirror, to the tower convey'd,

rmising, all its virtue was derived
om angles and reflections well contrived.
me speak their wonder of that sword, at large,
hich arm'd the champion for so fierce a charge.
ey call to mind the memorable gash
f royal Telephus, and spear of ash,
is foe Achilles hurl'd; though when its rust
as scraped, it heal'd him with the scatter'd dust.
e nature of the weapons seem'd allied.
ow dwelt their thoughts on every method tried
o temper steel, and harden best its edge;
e time and art that its success would pledge.
ese are unknown, be it confess'd, to me.
ey notice next the ring of Canace;
amed by such new, inexplicable art.
us talk the gather'd crowds, ere they depart.
'Tis yet agreed on, by another class,
r skill produced, from simple ashes, glass;
t glass and ashes were unlike, in all;
nce rash surmise might into error fall.
r, till the cause of floods we can explore,
tides alternate, or the ocean's roar,
nature's works, in gossamer and mist,
uch on its strangeness do we still insist.

Thus they indulged in various talk, nor ceased,
Till the king, rising, left the finish'd feast.
The sun his rapid course had downward bent,
The royal lion noticed in ascent,
When brave Cambuscan, from the exalted place
Where stood his table, moved, with stately pace,
Descending to the pavement, from its floor;
Whence, through the hall, the minstrels march'd before.
Thus to his presence-room the guests retire,
While music speaks the full-resounding quire.
Unnumber'd instruments their powers unite,
And with the raptures of the bless'd delight.
Now gladdest summons to the dance obeys
Each votary gay of Venus, who surveys,
On high from Pisces*, her congenial sign,
Courtiers and dames, the adorers of her shrine.
With beating breasts the signal they await.
The king o'erlooks them from his chair of state,
There, as he sits to view the sprightly ball,
The knight's returning steps his thought recall.

* In the old astrology, Venus was supposed to exe its strongest influence in this sign of the zodiac.

He bows, approaching, and exults to see
His partner doom'd the beauteous Canace.
The faint resemblance of the mirth to catch
In those who saw not, ere they traced the sketch,
Powers of uncommon excellence would ask,
And youth or love must prompt them in the task.
Who could describe the dance's varying form,
Or grace unequall'd, though with rapture warm?
Who the coquette's dissembled look askance,
Lest kindling jealousy should blame the glance?
Launcelot * alone possess'd a suited store
Of language apt, and he is now no more.
While yet the dance detains, the steward's voice
Hastens supplies of wine and spices choice.
The squires and ushers his injunctions hear,
And straight the spices and the wine appear.
Rest, by fatigue o'ercome, their spirits sink,
The wish'd refreshment brought, they eat and drink.
Then, in the house of prayer their duty done,
They sup, illumin'd by the rising sun.
As a king's banquet, plenty, well they know
The portion is of all, both high and low.

* An eminent knight of the round table, possessing all accomplishments of a courtier and man of gallantry.

This it was now, with excellence of fare
Much beyond all I can imagine rare.
The supper o'er, the noble king goes out
To view the steed, and a resplendent rout,
Ladies and lords, whom courtly forms oblige;
Nor, since old Ilium's memorable siege,
Had any horse such general wonder caused,
Nor less discourse, in praise of any, paused.
The king implores the knight, when they arrive,
The theme, with more precision, to revive
Of those rare qualities the beast display'd,
And laws, in rest or motion, it obey'd.
'Twas then the horse alertly, o'er the ground,
Touch'd by the knight, began to skip and bound.
Who said, " This only will suffice, dread sire,
" Whate'er the adventurous journey you desire,
" That in his ear a secret pin you turn,
" Which from my mouth you shall in private learn
" And, this perform'd, the country's name declare
" 'Tis then you wish to visit through the air.
" Nor needs a safe return invention wrack;
" Another pin, so moved, will bear you back;
" And wheresoe'er the ponderous beast alight,
" Fix'd 'twill remain, in strength's and art's despite

" Should you command it, and this pin be stirr'd,
" 'Twill vanish straight, obedient to a word,
" And at a word return, if those they be
" Which you shall instantly be taught by me.
" And trust, none else, his journey long or short,
" Will boast conveyance of a readier sort."
When from the knight the king enough had gain'd
Of wish'd instruction, and no doubt remain'd,
With joyful heart, and of his present proud,
He sought, expected, the carousing crowd.
The bridle straight is in the tower inclosed,
Where jewel heaps of costliest kind reposed;
But the horse vanishes—I know not how,
Nor shall I dare describe; but suffer now
The revel's mirth the enliven'd guests to absorb,
Till the sky blush with day's returning orb.

PART II.

Composing sleep, digestion's healthful nurse,
Winks on the band, and warning, lest, averse
From her dull presence, they her aid dismiss,
Salutes them, yawning, with a sluggard's kiss.

The o'erheated blood, they hear the power suggest,
Asks instant care, and calming hours of rest.
Thankful they hear, and one by one withdrawn,
Confess her prudence in a drowsy yawn;
Her salutary call convenient judge,
Nor, when unsafe, the dregs of pleasure grudge.
The floating fancies of repletion's brain
To tell at large, were simple as 'tis vain;
Dreams uninspired, of light effect and cause.
Each from late sleep prolong'd refreshment draws;
But not fair Canace: ere this at eve,
She of her father took her custom'd leave,
Unwilling, as becomes the modest fair,
Pale dissipation's harass'd looks to wear.
Early she rose, no morning slumber sought,
For the loved presents still engaged her thought,
The wondrous ring, and mirror deem'd so strange.
Oft did her cheek with blushing rapture change,
Nor even in sleep, from pleasing care exempt,
The fair one only of her mirror dreamt.
Hence, ere the sun was high, till waking heard
The matrons, to her service proud preferr'd,

he call'd: obedient they attend, but say,
one yet is stirring, and 'tis hardly day.
"Wearied with sleep, 'tis my desire," she cries,
"Straight to walk forth, and instant I would rise."
With busy thought, assured of her resolve,
ow best to do her pleasure they revolve.
he train are trooping at her call survey'd;
or later shines, attired, the royal maid
ike the bright sun that, free from clouds, displays
s now, in Aries, more refulgent rays.
hin vapours only o'er its surface spread,
o sense enlarged, a ruddy light it shed,
hen she, in habit for the season fit,
ew of her train, prepared the house to quit.
long the shady park her way she took,
ll'd now with joy, where'er she chanced to look,
every charm that graced the gaudy spring;
w struck with wonder at the magic ring,
which to her the sylvan quire express'd
eir inmost thoughts, yet only sooth'd the rest.
To shun the likeness of a style prolix,
d with no story vain digression mix,
ill profit him who undertakes to rule
e passions, less obedient when they cool.

Lest in my tale description I should waste
On wearied spirits, to its end I haste.

High on a tree, beside whose root the sod,
With sportive joy, the beauteous princess trod,
A falcon perching sent a plaintive sound,
That pierced afar the shadowy region round.
With either wing it smote its breast, that bore
The vestige of its beak, in gushing gore.
By nature's laws had tears distressful flow'd
From eyes of brutes, that inborn feeling shew'd,
No furious tiger had the sight withstood,
Nor any ruthless rover of the wood.
For to the man who best the merit knew
Of falcons, praise had never seem'd so due;
Nor thus could any shape or plumage boast,
It seem'd some present from a distant coast.
So fast the blood distill'd from every wound,
This falcon nearly with its loss had swoon'd,
And tottering, as it clung, with feeble feet,
Scarce on the branch maintain'd its lofty seat.
The king's fair daughter, Canace, who brought
Not only means to explain her secret thought,
But power sufficient, in the ring she bare,
To hold discourse with every bird of air,

The meaning of its mournful accents knew,
And, with a look of pity, nearer drew.
Below the tree she stretch'd her pendent skirt
To save in such a fall its limbs from hurt,
When next it fainted, (which might soon arrive,
The falcon scarce, with loss of blood, alive),
There long she stood expecting; but express'd
At last the sympathy that sway'd her breast.
"What is the cause, instruct me," said the fair,
"Why you these unexampled sufferings bear,
"Thrilling each ear with piteous plaints the while?
"Is it some favourite's death, or lover's guile?
"For of all ills, to feeling breasts, the chief
"Are these, and sources of the bitterest grief.
"No other tale, I know, have you to tell,
"Who, your own passion's victim, prove full well
"That selfish terror wakes not your regret,
"Nor have I seen a foe your safety threat.
"Shew to yourself some pity, I implore;
"Else whither will this tend? for ne'er before
"One instance have I view'd, with troubled thought,
"Of bird or beast that thus its sorrow sought.
"My heart these symptoms of misfortune wring.
"Ah! leave yon bough, and truly, as I spring

" From royal parents, if the power be mine,
" And the sad cause appear why you repine,
" Ere night the ill its remedy shall find;
" (So help me, heaven, as I have this in mind!)
" And I, that pain no longer may disturb,
" Will to your wounds apply each healing herb."
Then, in the saddest accent, since her birth,
The unhappy falcon shriek'd, and fell to earth.
She seem'd, as senseless as a stone, to fall;
When, bent life's wonted functions to recall,
The beauteous princess, pitying her mishap,
Transferr'd the mourner to her friendly lap.
There laid, and cherish'd, from her trance she woke,
And in the mother tongue of falcons spoke.
" That tender hearts are best prepared to know,
" From their own pain, the extent of others " woe,
" Both by the opinions which the wise maintain,
" And wide example's daily proof, is plain.
" All gentleness from gentle hearts proceeds;
" And yours, I see, for my affliction bleeds,
" Enchanting Canace, and ills which vex
" Feels with the promptness of your softer sex.

"'Tis not my hope your proffer'd aid to earn,
"But wish that you, what you inquire, may learn,
"And in my sad experience be supplied,
"A useful lesson, and a certain guide."
While one thus speaks her grief, the other hears
Oppress'd with thought, and deluged with her tears.
At length the falcon bade the princess pause,
And, sighing, thus declared her sorrow's cause.
"Here was I bred (the recollection shocks)
"And our nest poised on yonder ridgy rocks.
"Each tender treatment which the unfledged re-
"ceive,
I had, and knew not what it was to grieve,
Till first abroad I dared direct my flight:
There a young hawk attracted soon my sight.
All mildness, as I fancied, he appear'd,
Nor thoughtless love his treacherous falseness
"fear'd:
So did he wear humility's disguise!
Such shew of truth, such fondness met my eyes,
So freely youth's gay pleasure he enjoy'd,
So lively was his grief, when ills annoy'd,
None dream'd deceit had in his actions part;
But what seem'd greater worth, was deeper art.

" Even as a snake his form in flowers conceals,
" Till he who passes, late his risk reveals;
" Even so this bird, in tenderness a dove,
" Feign'd soft obedience, and attentive love,
" And lavish of professions soon believed,
" This artless breast, in luckless hour deceived.
" As on some tomb rich sculpture we survey,
" But putrid lurks below the unsightly clay;
" Such was the hawk, and thus his purpose screen'd,
" That none could search it, save the inspiring
" fiend.
" And he so press'd a suit, the task of years,
" With kind upbraidings, and with treacherous tears,
" That my poor heart, which well he knew to move,
" Lest love so violent his death should prove,
" Granted whate'er, protesting truth, he craved,
" And only from the wretch my honour saved;
" This point agreed, our union's single bond,
" His should I be, as he was truly fond,
" His should each thought, within my bosom hid,
" Each claim of lawless gallantry forbid.
" Heaven knows this promise I required as just;
" But leagues, with treacherous falsehood, who can
" trust?

" Soon as the tiger-hearted suitor found
" Love had his wishes, unresisting, crown'd,
" Our vows exchanged, a master in deceit,
" He fell, with seeming reverence, at my feet.
" With gentle manner, and with soft address,
" Much joy pretending at his new success,
" In art even Jason, fortunate beheld
" Through love, and Trojan Paris he excell'd.
" Nor, since two wives to Lamech link'd, began
" First to display the roving bent of man,
" Nor even since him, the father of mankind,
" Such depth of guile could observation find.
" Rank'd by their art, beneath him those of old
" Deserved not menial offices to hold.
" None could with thanks so winningly requite.
" To mark his manner was a heavenly sight;
" And none more shew'd, of all the race of birds,
" How graceful gesture dignifies our words.
" If full of truth he seem'd, his merit such,
" The thought unjustly would be deem'd too much,
" I to his interest spared, with wakeful zeal,
" Used, like my own, his slightest woes to feel.
" In all, his honour'd will to mine gave law,
" Save where obstructed I my duty saw,

" The worth that makes obedience sweet had he:
" Not power itself possess'd such charms for me.
" Two years and more this heavenly dream en-
" dured,
" And of his fondness I was well assured;
" But fortune had resolved that he, at last,
" Should leave the scene of our enjoyment pass'd.
" To tell my sorrow were superfluous pain,
" And all my power in such a labour vain;
" But this I can affirm (nor waste my breath),
" Now do I know what are the pangs of death.
" He took his leave one inauspicious morn,
" Seeming constrain'd, in accent so forlorn,
" That when I hear'd him speak, in plaintive tone,
" I thought his grief as poignant as my own.
" Yet, such had seem'd his truth, I fear'd no
" more,
" Nor dreamt of harm, his urgent business o'er.
" Till 'twas dispatch'd, enduring what must be,
" I made a virtue of necessity.
" My grief, dissembling, though by him unshared,
" Near him I stood, and solemnly declared,
" By holy John, as to our tie was due,
" My future life should, as my past, be true.

need not, what he answer'd, here rehearse:
None better speaks than he, and none acts
" worse.
" At length he bent his flight to distant fields.
When rest full leisure to reflection yields,
This dangerous adage ruled, I deem, his mind,
" All are on earth attracted to their kind.'
Perhaps 'tis noticed by the race of man;
And change and novelty no less its plan.
For birds in cages sumptuously are fed,
Their floor below with softest covering spread;
And servants store, as waiting on their lord,
Of honey, sugar, milk, and bread, accord;
But, when the unfasten'd slider is drawn up,
The joyous prisoner spurns his brimming cup;
Swift to the woods escapes, in folly firm;
And dainties leaves, contented with a worm.
No sense of interest, and no sacred tie
Can with variety's allurement vie.
Such proved my faithless mate, accursed the day!
Though sprung from generous sires, and young,
" and gay,
Comely in person, humble, yet not shy.
He saw a kite, of winning figure fly;

" He saw—and loved! and with relentless haste,
" His falcon's image from his mind effaced.
" His love now honours the detested kite,
" And I in vain deplore my ravish'd right."
Fast, as she ended, from the falcon flow'd
Her tears: she fell again, a senseless load.
Whom, in her lap, fair Canace receives.
The train attendant, with the princess grieves,
Prompt each attention to the oppress'd to shew,
And shrill resounds the voice of female woe.
Homeward they bear the falcon, faint and weak,
And bind the wounds inflicted by her beak.
The princess herbs from fields adjoining bear,
And salves, the pride of housewifery, prepares,
To heal her bird, and, form'd with care its shed,
Suspends it anxious at her couch's head:
'Tis painted all within of sober blue,
Unchanging constancy's peculiar hue;
But green denotes a fickle bent without,
Where every bird whose faith is held in doubt,
Titmice, and hawks, and owls, appear to stand,
And the pie hops, with ceaseless noise, at hand.
Her presence, still importunate observed,
Like chattering censure, shew'd what they deserved

Here will I leave the falcon, day and night
Tended with care by her protectress bright;
Nor more describe the wonders of the ring,
Till I may show the reconcilement spring
From good Camballo's offices benign,
And the wild hawk his lawless love resign.
Now I proceed to speak of battles dread,
Where, fired with glory, valiant Tartars bled;
And strange adventures, filling with amaze,
Of fame, unequall'd in all former days.
First will I tell you of Cambuscan brave,
To whom proud conquest many a city gave;
Next him, who Theodora had to wife,
In battle won, the valiant Algarsife,
Condemn'd through danger to delight to pass,
And only rescued by his horse of brass;
Then will I tell you with what champion fought
The adventurous brothers, who the princess sought,
The beauteous Canace; thus hard to win:
And still, where I left off, will next begin.

* * * * * * * * * *

PERSII

SAT. VI.

Admovit jam bruma foco te, Basse, Sabino?
Jámne lyra, et tetrico vivunt tibi pectine chordæ?
Mire opifex numeris veterum primordia vocum,
Atque marem strepitum fidis intendisse Latinæ,
Mox juvenes agitare jocos, et pollice honesto
Egregios lusisse senes. mihi nunc Ligus ora
Intepet, hybernátque meum mare, quà latus ingens
Dant scopulì et multâ littus se valle receptat.
" Lunaï portum est operæ cognoscere, cives."
Cor jubet hoc Ennî, postquam destertuit esse
Mæonides Quintus pavone ex Pythagoreo.
Hìc ego securus vulgi; et quid præparet Auster

PERSIUS,

SIXTH SATIRE,

IMITATED.

TO THE REV. MR. MASON.

Are Aston's hearths yet summon'd to supply
The needful heat autumnal days deny?
O skill'd to draw from British harps anew
Those martial sounds that fear of death subdue,
Or soothing, shew the sufferings love can cause,
The grief of shepherds, and the garden's laws;
With storms already, Mason, rings my shed,
And sullen fogs o'er Thames's banks are spread,
O'er the proud castle, and the forest shade,
"By godlike poets venerable made." *
For so the bard in whom we all admire,
And own, transfused, the mighty Homer's fire.
Careless of critic tongues, I shape the soil
With changeful fancy, and uncertain toil;

* Windsor Forest, ver. 270.

Infelix pecori; securus et angulus ille
Vicini nostro quia pinguior; et si adeò omnes
Ditescant orti pejoribus: usque recusem
Curvus ob id minui senio, aut cœnare sinè uncto,
Et signum in vapidâ naso tetigisse lagenâ.
Discrepet his alius. geminos, horoscope, varo
Producis genio. solis natalibus est qui
Tingat olus siccum muriâ vafer in calice emptâ,
Ipse sacrum irrorans patinæ piper. hic bona dente
Grandia magnanimus peragit puer. utar ego, utar:
Nec rhombos ideò libertis ponere lautus,
Nec tenuem solers turdarum nôsse salivam.

Careless I hear the rainy winds resound,
Or wait their influence on my flocks around.
And if the trite complaint, that upstarts proud
Rise o'er our heads, and every parish crowd,
Assail me, little it disturbs that I,
Fallen from a sire's and grandsire's dignity,
Equal those older ancestors alone,
Whose guiltless eminence the shire will own.
Must I, for this, grow gray before my hour,
Or hail with rapture compound interest's power;
Hoard at the expence of comfort, meanly dine,
And drink the cheapest, and the worst, of wine?
But turns are different: of two twins, the one
Will, save on feast days, all indulgence shun,
Then, for himself, he cooks his treat of sauce,
And follows custom with the lightest loss:
The other, gallant spirit, heaps his board
With meats the richest only can afford.
But, if I would not, angry that they shine,
Toil lest their wealth be reckon'd more than mine,
So neither would I rival their expence.
Scarce 'twere in me a bearable pretence
With turtles fresh my servants' hall to cheer,
Or use my taste to every dish that's dear.

Messe tenus propriâ vive: et granaria (fas est)
Emole. quid metuas? occa. et seges altera in herbâ est.
Ast vocat officium. trabe ruptâ, Bruttia saxa
Prendit amicus inops: rémque omnem, surdáque vota
Condidit: Ionio jacet ipse in littore, et unà
Ingentes de puppe Dei: jamque obvia mergis
Costa ratis laceræ. nunc et de cespite vivo
Frange aliquid: largire inopi, ne pictus oberret
Cæruleâ in tabulâ. " Sed cœnam funeris hæres
" Negliget iratus, quòd rem curtaveris: urnæ
" Ossa inodora dabit; seu spirent cinnama surdum,
" Seu ceraso peccent casiæ, nescire paratus.
" Túne bona incolumis minuas?" sed Bestius urget
Doctores Graios: ita fit, postquam sapere urbi
Cum pipere et palmis, venit nostrum hoc maris expers,
Fœnisecæ crasso vitiârunt unguine pultes.
Hæc cinere ulterior metuas? at tu meus hæres,

Our bounds are clearly traced: our incomes shew
How far the wants of moderation go.
Empty your barns; next year they will be stored.
Perhaps, 'tis duty warns, our aid implored.
Some friend a gainful voyage hopes, till, mark!
Blown on the rocks of Scilly, splits his bark:
His all is lost, and to the distant eye
The shiver'd wreck, emerging, points on high,
Where sea-gulls haunt, amid the ocean's roar:
He gains with labour Cornwall's dreary shore.
That he may save some portion of renown,
Nor bear a mean petition through the town,
"Can we not sell?" Cries one, "with acres part!
"I know whose heir would take it much to heart.
"Scarce would his funeral decently pass off:
"At promised pomp the nettled squire would scoff.
"What! with impunity the estate impair!"—
But philosophic Gray would little care,
And, by the forty sages unperplex'd,
Hold, such degenerate wants our nation vex'd
Since they taught wisdom, who long taught to dance,
And to ape Reason, was a mode from France.
Then let us fearless look beyond the grave.
But you, strange heir, a word with you I crave.

Quisquis eris, paulùm à turbâ seductior, audi.
O bone, num ignoras? missa est à Cæsare laurus
Insignem ob cladem Germanæ pubis, et aris
Frigidus excutitur cinis: ac jam postibus arma,
Jam chlamydas regum, jam lutea gausapa captis,
Essedáque ingentésque locat Cæsonia Rhenos.
Dis igitur, Genióque ducis centum paria, ob res
Egregiè gestas, induco: quis vetat? aude.

Suppose you claim, as mine, this mansion fair
Past to *heirs general*, or the Lord knows where.
I now would whisper. In the glorious cause
Of Gallic freedom, and of Nature's laws
A junto firm, who well their lords obey,
Write of their sure successes from Vendée:
The prompt Convention every line repeat.
Now sans-culottes in Reason's temple meet.
Gay civic feasts with patriot kisses join;
For soon we read of triumphs on the Rhine.
Of these the stage takes charge, and, o'er the scene,
Ennobled generals stir the people's spleen.
Bank's ermined train in all their pride advance,
And sovereigns arm'd the warlike pomp enhance.
But what are such when Liberty's alarm
Swells her loud voice, and lifts her thundering arm?
She proves her sons, as on this festal night,
Brightest in virtue, boldest in the fight.
Can any doubt of Gallic freedom's bliss?
But, not to keep you, what I mean is this.
Whoe'er, of oratoric powers, command
The applause, in clubs, of the reforming band,
Since the millenium seems no more remote,
Shall, on my banker, have a general note—

Væ, nisi connives. oleum artrocreásque popello
Largior; an prohibes? dic claré. "Non adeò," inquis:
"Exossatus ager juxtà est." Age, si mihi nulla
Jam reliqua ex amitis, patruelis nulla, proneptis
Nulla manet: patrui sterilis matertera vixit,
Déque aviâ nihilum superest: accedo Bovillas
Clivúmque ad Virbî. præstò est mihi Manius hæres.
Progenies terræ? quære ex me, quis mihi quartus
Sit pater, haud promptè, dicam tamen. adde etiam unum,
Unum etiam: terræ est jam filius: et mihi ritu

I mean the needy. Heavens! how pale that face!
Nay, storm not; I can fancy a worse case.
Suppose I add the libellers to these.
" Good sir," you say—" reflect sir, if you please,
" Should you reduce me to your country seat,
" Gravel, I own, is healthy, clean, and neat,
" Yet too much there, for such demands prevails;
" Which ask a fertile mould that never fails."
Though now it seem some pretext claims respect,
'Tis plain, whate'er I do, you will object.
Know then, had you and friends no legal right,
'Twould be my anxious business, day and night,
To use my power, and a successor find,
As prudence, or perhaps caprice, inclined.
That will I now; nor need I travel long
Ere shine some open aspect in the throng:
Some petty freehold's lord shall boast a name
From royal licence, and be raised to fame.
How superciliously you note his birth!
But we are all inhabitants of earth.
Look on our pedigree; how short appears
That string of ancestors your pride reveres,
And knew we more, I possibly might see
This honest yeoman is allied to me.

Manius hic generis propè major avunculus exit.
Qui prior es, cur me in decursu lampada poscis?
Sum tibi Mercurius: venio Deus huc ego, ut ille
Pingitur; en renuis? vín' tu gaudere relictis?
Deest aliquid summæ: minui mihi: sed tibi totum est,
Quicquid id est. ubi sit fuge quærere, quod mihi quondam
Legârat Tadius: neu dicta repone paterna;
Fænoris accedat merces; hinc exime sumptus.
Quid reliquum est? reliquum? nunc, nunc, impensiùs unge,
Unge, puer, caules. mihi festâ luce coquatur
Urtica, et fissâ fumosum sinciput aure,
Ut tuus iste nepos olim, satur anseris extis,
Patriciæ immeiat vulvæ? mihi trama figuræ
Sit reliqua: ast illi tremat omento popa venter?

Cousins of every kind I next should trace
To Adam, father of the human race.
Our tie, you hold, is no conjecture vague:
Then why more plague me than even strangers plague?
By me, at least, you cannot fear to lose:
Take as you find me, or your chance refuse.
The fortune I received, though render'd less,
You, by the laws of England, will possess:
And do you ask, how much I mean to save
Of what a father, in his goodness, gave?
Preach you retrenchment, in old-fashion'd strain,
And hope my capital may whole remain?
But avarice works again: you sum the amount.
Presumptuous wretch! I'll settle this account.
Haste ye, my servants, to the city fly;
Nor heed the price, but every dainty buy.
Bear round my cards; for I am wiser grown
At length: I will, I will enjoy my own.
Shall I abstain, that this low wretch, grown nice,
May seek the palm of fashionable vice?
May win new glory from successful bets,
In favours paid some noble beauty's debts?
Like a pale ghost, shall I appear; but he
Owe bloated looks to what he gains from me?

" Vende animam lucro: mercare; atq; excute solers
" Omne latus mundi, ne sit præstantior alter
" Cappadocas rigidâ pingues plausisse catastâ.
" Rem duplica." Feci; jam triplex, jam mihi quartò,
Jam decies redit in rugam. depunge, ubi sistam,
Inventus, Chrysippe, tui finitor acervi.

" Consult our interest," would he whisper still.
" Go, sue for places you're unfit to fill.
" For these by turns give fiercest foes support.
" Beset the minister, and ply the court,
" Scorn'd while you cringe; and wean'd from power
" your heart,
" Lose independence, its far nobler part."
What must I? 'tis resolved; no more I blame.
You have me, humble, as befits, and tame.
One annual thousand, with all profits clear,
Ushers the thriving pensioner's career.
Now four are added. When content you'll tell.
Behold six more, and own 'twas managed well.
Still silent? now six more my arts obtain.
Not yet enough!—To slave for you is vain.
Who to the limits of desires could reach,
Lax, as the logic of a patriot's speech?

ODE

WRITTEN AT THE GERMAN SPA.

1782.

ELYSIAN scenes, that now, once more,
Ere six revolving years are o'er,
  Allure my voluntary feet
To trace the paths, thick branches shade,
Or near the rill, or in the glade,
    Their pleasing toil repeat;

I come not, tortured by disease,
To seek the boon of healthful ease;
  At pitying Nature's bounteous hand;
Nor, where yon crystal fount distils,
With real, or with imaged ills,
    To join the eager band.

Grateful for blessings own'd, yet now,
O let me, on this shrubby brow,
  Unnoted by the mirthful throng,

Pour, as the favouring Muse's fire,
And heaven's beneficence, inspire,
My solitary song.

Hygeia here perfumes the gales,
And o'er the labourer's pains prevails;
Here Science may her votary save,
Or Europe's statesmen life imbibe,
And lands their destiny ascribe
To the salubrious wave.

Yet, not to outward cures confined,
The body from the kindred mind
Full oft has borrow'd a resource;
And Fancy oft, successful, tries
The sweet enchantment of Surprise,
To instil returning force.

For not in vain such glories, sure,
Those towering oaks, these glooms obscure,
And mountains thus abrupt, are given,
Whose sides, with mossy cloathing brown,
The shatter'd torrent thunders down,
By Oreads headlong driven,

Discovering now its progress hoar;
Now deadening behind rocks its roar;
And now that, born, a silent stream,
Along the fertile valley, strays,
And clear o'er pebbles rolls its maze,
That trembles to the beam.

The beauties of the varied view,
The whispering air, the heaven's hue,
Of power to remedy may prove;
The timid cuckow's distant call,
And, through each swell, and melting fall,
The music of the grove.

Each note is of a charm possess'd,
May sooth some rankling care to rest,
Or pleasure new, to heal, impart;
On all the foliage magic hangs;
And warbling brooks to bitter pangs
Apply their lenient art.

Far as the exalted eye beholds,
The Genius of the forest folds
With smiles, around, his verdant robe;

And marshes dank, and wilds untrod,
Rejoicing, feel the present God
Re-animate the globe.

A tract, that, under Winter's sway,
Through all the dark, tempestuous day,
Fierce wolves astonish as they howl;
Now leave, and into caverns go,
When whistling winds have ceased to blow,
And skies no longer scowl!

Even while I sing, the entrancing sight
Casts o'er my soul a sudden light;
The vital currents freer glide;
And every damp oppression leaves
My bounding heart, that, glad, receives,
And sends, the genial tide:

Unwonted strength my members own;
Languor recedes, and Toil is flown,
As round my raptured gaze I bear,
And see, beneath the sky serene,
Its fullest flowers and richest Green *
The Summer landscape wear.

* —— gay Green,
Thou smiling Nature's universal robe. THOMS. Spring.

ODE

TO H—— V——, ESQ. ON HIS EXPLOITS AT ALGIERS.

Non hæc *jocosæ* conveniunt lyræ.

V—— the adapted chords to explore
I hasten, pleased; and yield applause,
Just to the worth that graces more
A noble cause:

Thy worth, that taught the lawless crew
What power may pass the midway flood:
What England's dreaded arms may do,
And gallant blood.

On the rich coasts Columbus show'd,
A V—— reap'd victorious praise;
A V—— Lybia's squadrons strow'd
In later days.

Echoing sublimely through the air,
Those deeds may loftier bards inspire,
Nor doom to warlike themes, though fair,
The Lesbian lyre.

Rather be mine to trace aright
Thy hail'd return, than issuing course;
Painting, in Love's attacks, the might
Of Battle's force;

As to the city thee thy stars
Again, with fame augmented, brought,
And troubled, shewn the British Mars,
Each virgin's thought.

Long each thy grace enough approved,
Wavering; but pride new merits quell,
As numerous axes, soon removed,
The beeches fell.

Stern Courage, arm'd by Love, arose,
And Enterprize, that never rests,
Thy prompt reserve: too mighty foes
For tender breasts!

O say, what Nymph's soft homage calls,
Whom haply her duenna keeps
Watchful, or less severe inthralls,
While Honour sleeps?

Perhaps, her chamber near, at eve,
When all is rapture, or repose,
To notes, that in accordance grieve,
Thou tell'st thy woes:

The heavens, the placid moon, the strings
Her melted soul, consenting, try;
And Love steals inward, on the wings
Of Harmony.

She mutters, "Love has known alloy
" Ere even sad Helen's act forbid:
" The scourge, that lash'd lamenting Troy,
" Now strikes Madrid.

" He sues, my slave, for favour, he
" Who binds imperious hearts in chains:
" For me the voice awakes, for me
" The lute complains.

" Those laurels that, from Algiers born,
" Aloft adorn'd his victor-brow,
" Cast at my feet, his chance to mourn,
" Endear his vow.

" Strange! that loud Strife, and War's alarm,
" And deeds of noon, Desire invite;
" Desire, that wanton Whispers charm,
" And silent Night!

" Strange! that sore wounds, which writhe in pains,
" And features we adore deform,
" The boiling current of our veins
" More inly warm!

" Ye saints, in heavenly realms afar,
" Daily preferr'd, religious hosts;
" That, in full ranks, the calendar
" Recording boasts;

" Nor all your numbers from its lures
" To wrest this struggling heart avail;
" My prayers mount fruitless, and, with yours,
" My efforts fail."

ODE

ON THE BACKWARDNESS OF SPRING.

WHY, rugged Winter, dost thou still
  Thy transitory sway resume?
Late, o'er the grove, and cheerless hill,
Did gentler winds our bosom fill
  With rapture, and succeed thy gloom.

Late azure heavens appear'd around,
  For snow, that veils the sable sky,
Rages in air, and heaps the ground;
While herds and men, wherever found,
  To refuge and to comfort fly.

Thus oft our eager purpose fails,
  And Ardour fruitless ends pursues!
But come, ye balmy breathing gales;
Come, Zephyr, to the frozen dales;
  Come, simple sounds, and vernal views.

Crown'd with new leaves, shall instant Spring
To mute Despondence bear her aid;
And as the woods responsive ring,
Her hues, o'er all, her odours, fling,
And beckon to the flowery shade:

Or, in the pastures while I stray,
Beneath green boughs will rivulets meet;*
Where, shelter'd from the cloudless day,
The fisher waits his silvery prey,
Or cattle shun the noontide heat.

With the gay labours of the field,
The season hastes, restrain'd too long,
With joys, that lawns, that copses yield,
Love's flame, through Nature's bounds reveal'd,
And Hope, to elevate the song.

* Just in the dubious point, where with the pool
Is mix'd the trembling stream ———
There throw, nice judging, the delusive fly.
THOMSON.

ODE;

BEING A CHORUS IN THE FIRST EDITION OF THE BATTLE OF EDDINGTON.

Let Worth, let Patriot Zeal, with eye
O'erflowing, and with drooping head;
Let all who venerate the mysterious tie
Of wedded Love, or Power bemoan,
Chased to the refuge of the obscure retreat
By savage foes, o'er his dominion spread,
Respect the pathless marsh, where mingling meet
The stores of Parret and of Thone.

While,* heedless of himself, the Chief
But labour'd for his country's good.
There his loved partner long partook his grief,
Among a circling infant race.
There long, the cause of England to support,
His subject-squadron every bribe withstood

* Pharsalia, lib. 2. ver. 241.

Of Want, unblamed Misfortune taught to court,
And cherish undeserved Disgrace,

If e'er Repose, and hoped Success
Reward the battle-wasted bands;
If e'er the counsels sage of Alfred bless
With promised law the impatient realm;
Long hence the thoughtful Briton shall exclaim,
As on the bank, with folded arms, he stands;
"Here could not foes extinguish Virtue's flame,
"Nor growing Liberty o'erwhelm,

"Leaving this ambush, girt with reeds,
"Full oft our fathers, to the increase
"Of urging ills opposed adventurous deeds,
"And vengeance dreadful, though unknown;
"Till happier triumphs teem'd, for wearied Woe,
"The friendly refuge, and the fruits of Peace.
"Then near the pathless marsh still honour'd flow
"Ye streams of Parret and of Thone." *

* "The greatest inconvenience Alfred laboured under "in this place arose from a scarcity of provisions, of "which the following story, told by all the old historians,

" is a proof. It happened one day during the winter,
" which proved uncommonly severe, that he had sent all
" his attendants out to endeavour to procure fish, or some
" kind of provisions; so difficult was the enterprize es-
" teemed, that the King and Queen only were excused
" from the employment. When they were gone, the
" King, as was his custom whenever he had an oppor-
" tunity, took a book, and began reading, whilst Elswi-
" tha was employed in her domestic concerns; they had
" not long continued thus engaged, before a poor pil-
" grim, accidentally passing that way, knocked at the
" gate, and begged they would give him something to
" eat. The humane King called to Elswitha, and de-
" sired her to give the poor man part of what provision
" there was in the fort: the Queen finding only one
" loaf, brought it to Alfred, to shew how slender their
" store was, at the same time representing the distresses
" the family would labour under, should they return from
" their foraging unsuccessful. The King, not deterred
" by this scanty view from his charitable purposes, but
" rather internally rejoicing at this trial of his humanity,
" cheerfully gave the poor Christian one half of the loaf;
" consoling the Queen with this religious reflection—
" That he who could feed five thousand with five loaves
" and two fishes, could make (if it so pleased him) that
" half of the loaf suffice for more than their necessities.

" When the traveller departed, the King returned to his
" reading, and felt that satisfaction which most surely
" results from a beneficent action. Nor was it long un-
" rewarded, for his companions returned with so great a
" quantity of provisions, that they were not exposed to
" any similar inconveniences during their seclusion."

Bicknell's Life of Alfred.

ELEGY

ON THE DEPARTURE OF MISS P—— AND J—— CH—— FROM PHILADELPHIA IN 1783, TO ATTEND THEIR MOTHER, INDISPOSED IN THE COUNTRY.

THE wintry gale through air its progress takes,
Deep-searching Delaware's arrested wave;
On the bared oaks collected, icy flakes
Succeed the garb a milder season gave:

No flock, nor lowing herd, enraptured, feeds;
Nor Nature's voice, and Love's, salute the grove,
While duty far the youthful sisters leads
To fields, whence late the gathering tempests drove.

With other objects, tinged by Summer's ray,
Resplendent pair, the general scene could charm,

When he, who plaintive sings, an earlier day,
With you beheld, nor dreaded Grief's alarm.

Soft whispering breezes, as the bank we trod,
Moved here the stream, there shook the trembling boughs,
And round your steps, on wing, and round their God,
The Loves, your captives vaunting, summ'd their vows.

Then Life's glad face, and Vegetation's smiles,
Then cloudless heavens allured the admiring eye,
The river's surface smooth, its shaded isles,
And mineral springs * its distant shores supply.

Thus, when to poets old the vernal beam
Unveil'd each opening bloom, and checker'd shade,
Fair Naïds, brightest guardians of the stream,
In rapturous vision near Ilissus stray'd.

Now Disappointment mocks the curious gaze;
Nor all, as late, with female grace conspires,

* At Bristol.

Or, with yourselves, exalting to due praise
Your kindred fair, e'en coldest bosoms fires.

No more, the station * sought, amused you note
Each group, slow-moving o'er the river's bed;
Nor Verdure's charms delight, nor roofs remote,
Nor floating toils, with patient ardour spread.

Such pleasures vanish'd, other comforts, hid
Ere, man to bless, Refinement sways the earth,
By Time unconquer'd, and to fade forbid,
Even Winter soothe, with animating Mirth.

O'er wide stretch'd capitals, when Darkness reigns,
And longer waves, in keener air, her wing,
Art boasts of haunts that rival fragrant plains,
Nor leave a sigh for Daylight and for Spring.

See, from the winds secure, and drifted heaps
Of dreary snow, the social bands repose:
Pale Fear, his phantoms chased by tapers, sleeps,
And vanquish'd Night † to lone recesses goes.

* The ferry.

† Vincunt funalia noctem. VIRG.

helter'd by lofty domes, a mingled troop
Confess, in mimic acts, Life's faithful draught;
he Passions fiercely rage, and sadly droop,
Or transient Follies feel the comic shaft.

o forms of native symmetry the dance
Gives motion here, and Posture's every grace;
ere choral notes the yielding soul entrance,
And in imaginary Eden place.

ere Reason raises, Wit relieves Discourse;
Narration Wonder wakes, and still Suspense;
r Sentiment unlocks a calmer source;
Or Laughter recreates unbending Sense.

om these ye fled, fair Nymphs. Ye fled! The lyre
Straight, at the word, in heavier measures moans;
ore sounds, for you first waked, its solemn wire
With deep vibrations, and with tardy tones.

ore thrilling throes the voice, the hand, the heart
Of Anguish prompt, and frame the sorrowing song,
hat hour to mourn, which saw you hence depart,
So late our pleasure, and our pride so long.

Can equal joy, denied your presence, bless,
Or when Sol's ray the rapid sled directs;
Or, in the illumined dome, adorn'd by dress,
When China's herb our nightly band collects?

Nor small the pain, where Admiration warms,
To fly those hearts, become by worth our own;
Witness the crowds that your attractive forms
Beheld enamour'd, and regretted groan.

But hark! new murmurs Friendship's voice proclaim.
(As Love, o'er Friendship boundless merits rule)
" Let not," it cries, " though pure the virtuous aim
" My vivid glow preceptive duty cool.

" Be own'd her honours; be obey'd her laws:
" Still shall, where'er the zones * of heaven extend
" From east to west, my name deserve applause,
" And Truth and Fable celebrate the Friend.

" Haste then, when Filial Love forbids no more
" The blameless deed, and will parental seals;

* Æneid, lib. 8. ver. 225.

" True to the temperate flame that fired before,
" Here seek the enjoyment my adorer feels.

" Here (for from places whence ye flew I call)
" The enlivening objects wait, that round shall rise,
" Welcomes sincere, the tribute due from all,
" And lighten'd bosoms, and rekindled eyes."

SONNET

ON A VERY TAME PIGEON, WHICH HAD DIED FROM PICKING UP SOME POISONOUS SUBSTANCE.

PRIDE of the race, once sacred held by Greece
To Love, and honour'd in the poet's strain;
(Though now thy frolic flights, required in vain
Among these flowers, and check'd by Sickness, cease,
Nor sound, with snowy plumes, the shades of Peace,
Each haunt of Leisure sought, his glance to gain);
Even Instinct's social tie shall Memory deign
To reverence, and from dumb Neglect release.
" Thine,"* oft I said (nor hoped so near thy end)
" Are all things round; the groves and cloudless sky:
" While cheers the enlivening ray, sport and enjoy.
" Thine are yon oaks, that o'er the stream impend,
" And rocks that, as I stray with musing eye,
" Or wonder from the shed, can never cloy."

* Anac. Ode 33.

SONNET

WRITTEN ON MOUNT MERLIN, IN WALES,

1796.

FAMED hill, that, as Tradition tells, wouldst show
To lonely Merlin, hence around display'd,
These varied beauties; mountains with their shade,
Far reaching, and meandering streams below;
Thou, to whose summit, Fate's decrees to know,
Ere Love his footsteps to the lake * convey'd,
High chiefs, 'tis sung, their eager journies made,
Now on such godlike gifts none faith bestow.

* —— the Lady of the Lake,
Whom long he loved, for him in haste did send.
In the mean time, through that false ladies traine,
He was surprised, and buried under beare,
Ne ever to his work return'd againe.
Fairie Queen, B. 3. c. 3. stanza 9.

Yet though my country, for a thousand years,
Were taught its doom, what warning more desired,
Or truer, could from hallow'd caverns sound,
Than this; " unfriended by his faithless fears,
Baseness shall rue the boon his prayers acquired,
And Valour be, alone, by Fortune crown'd?"

EPIGRAMS.

EPIGRAM

ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN.

WHEN English law on new foundations rose,
And Alfred gloried in his realm's repose,
Justice, that saw, amazed, the finish'd work,
Broke forth, one fancied blemish seen to lurk:
"And shall harsh rules devote the race's flower?
"Nor Beauty's favourites boast an equal power?
"Here I condemn—But hold; the rash complains,
"And still wise Providence aright ordains:
"Though part seem injured, all must win respect—
"True; Man *shall* act, but Woman *may* direct."

EPIGRAM

ON THE FIRE AT THE OPERA HOUSE.

VANBRUGH, the roof to trills responsive falls,
And flames yield only to thy sturdy walls.

Each noble's seat, who chanting chiefs approved,
Their palaces, though now, with groves, removed;
The flutes, or strings, by whose assistant charms
They sooth'd with love, or terrified with arms;
Their vestments, Rome's, or Persia's proud attire,
All seized alike by the relentless fire,
And females scared, and eunuchs, as they run,
Appease the shades of Pope and Addison.

EPIGRAM

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF A TRIFLE.

You paint great changes, come, in France, to pass;
I think but of my loss—a spying-glass.
Yet scarce more justly did the Cyclops sigh,
Spoil'd by Ulysses of his single eye.

EPIGRAM

ON A FAILURE OF STUCCO.

Call'd to restore the structure's outward grace,
That plaster whiten'd, and its wrecks deface;

The artist asks, "which shed did time subdue?"
"Which shed?" replies its owner, "'tis the new."

EPIGRAM.

A CONSOLATION OF AVARICE.

SPOUSE of unfetter'd heart, though now a wife
In wedlock's bands has fasten'd thee for life;
Her features mean some good forebode thee still,
And looks repulsive, that with terror thrill:
To flattering crowds let tempted Beauty yield;
Thy rights are guarded by a Gorgon shield.

EPIGRAM

ON A LOVE MATCH.

CHREMES, thy son with kindness still behold,
Though, warm to Beauty, Wealth confess him cold.
Beauty from Beauty springs: no more rebuke—
Thy winning grandchild may espouse a duke.

EPIGRAM

ON THE ILLUMINATIONS, IN CONSEQUENCE OF HIS MAJESTY'S RECOVERY.

A MONARCH's health, suspended long, to greet,
And speak at once the joy of many a street,
As Darkness spreads, all London kindling soon,
The wheels are guided by the blaze of Noon.
Taste each gay form of order'd light surveys,
And Science every hue the prism displays.

EPIGRAM.

THE SUPPOSED REFLECTION OF ONE, WHO FAILED IN HIS APPLICATION FOR PREFERMENT AT A GREAT COURT.

SCARCE could I think that rough address, and face,
A Courtier's, till refused my promised place.

EPIGRAM

ON WINDSOR'S BECOMING THE RESIDENCE OF THE COURT.

The seat of Edward well befits the train,
Whose pomp adorns a prosperous Ruler's reign.
There, beneath forests, cherish'd Commerce stems
The untroubled waters of the silent Thames;
And just the City's spires are seen, to grace
With suited majesty, the reverend place.
There too the field* of Freedom, at whose sight
John erst had shrunk, a Brunswick may delight.

EPIGRAM.

THE PROSELYTE.

You've preach'd away my notions vain
From texts in the Apostle Paine.
No longer unenlighten'd zeal
For England's glory do I feel;

* Runnymede.

No longer sum, with swelling heart,
Her feats in War, and wreaths of Art;
Her poets charming every age,
And truth unfolded by her sage.
The city long I wish'd to last,
Become as beauteous as 'tis vast:
But careless now, whene'er I can,
With clubbists hail the Rights of Man.
Discourse, still treating of the theme,
Shall prove, on this I think and dream
From morn till eve, from dusk till dawn:
Fear not—but pardon if I yawn.

EPIGRAM.

A HUSBAND'S APOLOGY.

However stoutly you maintain
That damages are solid gain,
My duel, I contend, was right:
What are horns given for, but to fight?

EPIGRAM

ON READING AN ESSAY UPON POLITICAL JUSTICE.

Briton, admonish'd of the fate
That threatens us, the ship of state
Rescue from danger, with all hands;
Nor strike upon the G—dw—n sands.

EPIGRAM

ON SOME POEMS, AND A PAMPHLET, PUBLISHED NEAR THE SAME TIME, BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Your rhymes are good, I own; but, ——,
I cannot think your reasons valid.

EPIGRAM

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Your prose, so fanciful and terse,
So just the doctrines of your verse;

For profit we may read your rhyme,
And with your pamphlet kill the time.

EPIGRAM

ON RECEIVING A GEM OF NEWTON, ENGRAVED FOR THE AUTHOR BY MARCHANT.

WELL hast thou, Marchant, toil'd to do thy part,
And grace the country with Athenian art.
Now Architecture plans, as George commands,
New wonders here, new praise in distant lands;
Painting perceives her own no vulgar doom;
And Sculpture's recent boasts astonish Rome.
Nor less the nicer skill, with pride, we see
Of old Pergoteles display'd by thee.
Arts banish'd, that on Louis fame bestow'd,
And to brute Force her only triumphs owed,
The works, whose merit rare no age disputes,
Let France *purloin*, while Britain *executes*.

EPIGRAM

ON THE SUCCESSES OF THE ARCHDUKE, 1796.

If Austria e'er her tarnish'd fame deplore,
The royal Brothers shall be then no more:
Scarce danger Justice for a land affrights,
Which Honour rules, and for which Courage
fights.

EPIGRAM

ON THE COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH AMERICA.

The vast Atlantic, that so wide
Once roll'd, the nations to divide,
Joins them, in happy hour allied.*

* And seas but join the nations they divide.
Pope. Windsor Forest.

TRANSLATIONS.

PETRARCH.

PART I.

POEMS DURING THE LIFE OF LAURA.

SONNET.

'Twas that dim day * the Sun's relenting rays,
In pity of a God, their splendour veil'd,
When with firm chains all unaware assail'd,
Thy glances bound me, too intent to gaze.
No risk I dreaded from the treacherous ways
Of Love, bright fair, and arms that oft prevail'd,
Till, unsuspecting victim, I bewail'd,
Too late, the common doom, with vain amaze.

* The day is recorded as being at April 6th, 1327. This concetto is imitated at the opening of Milton's fine ode on Christmas day, and by no means rendered less of a concetto.

Love found me a disarm'd and helpless foe,
Swift at my heart directing, through these eyes,
The shaft, that opes their sluices sad for life.
Nor was it valiant, sure, by mean surprise
My feeble and unguarded power to o'erthrow,
Yet from thy front retire, prepared for strife.

SONNET

TO STEPHEN COLONNA THE ELDER.

O GLORIOUS Column,* by whose strength are stay'd
Our ardent hopes, and Latium's name divine;
That, from thy path, and Conduct's certain line,
Jove ne'er has daunted, by his storms dismay'd;
† No palace, theatre, or porch's shade,
But, in their stead, a fir, a beech, a pine,
O'er the green turf, and heights, whose charms adjoin,

* Alluding to the Italian word Colonna.

† Petrarch, when this nobleman was at Avignon, had eagerly made inquiries of him, to which this alludes, concerning the remains of ancient magnificence at Rome, which his patriotism made so interesting to him.

And mounting, or descending, poets aid,
From earth to heaven here lift the ravish'd mind:
And the sweet nightingale, in thickest grove
That pours each eve her ditty, and complains,
O'ercomes the heart with thoughts of saddest love.
Only Joy's measure is by thee confined,
My noble friend, whose absence Fate ordains.

SONNET *

ON PLANTING A LAUREL, NEAR A RIVULET, IN HONOUR OF LAURA, IN A SPOT WHICH SHE FREQUENTED.

If yet thou glow'st, Apollo, with that fire
Which once in Thessaly thy breast inflamed,
And, for the bright-hair'd beauty's charms so famed,
Hast not, at length, forgotten thy desire;

* The resemblance, in their names, of the laurel tree and his mistress, had so struck the imagination of Petrarch, that, in his poems, Daphne, Laura, and the laurel, become synonymous terms.

From the cold frosts, and wint'ry winds, whose ire
Is, when thou hidest thy majesty, proclaim'd,
Protect the sacred plant, with reverence named,
By which I too, ensnared, to Love aspire.
And, for that amorous hope, which sooth'd of old
Thy pain, and made thy life less sadly pass,
From this unhealthy moisture purge the air.
Soon with what wonder shall we both behold,
By her own arms, far reaching o'er the grass,
So proudly shaded, our much-honour'd fair!

BALLAD.

I SEE the obtrusive veil (be it confess'd!)
Alike in sunshine and in shade,
Obdurate fair one, carefully display'd,
Well prove thou know'st the secrets of my breast.
Ere yet the oppressive passion was reveal'd,
That daily dooms me to Affliction's load,
Relenting Pity soften'd in thy look;
But, when thy power my agitation shew'd
Those locks admired were suddenly conceal'd,
And glances interrupted from me took
Relief, whose absence I but ill can brook.

Thus am I govern'd by a veil,
That from me, whether cold or heat assail,
Hides the bright eyes that have so often bless'd.

SONNET.

WHENE'ER, among the comrades of the dame,
Bright Love approaches in her beauteous mien,
As much as each beneath her charms are seen,
Swells my desire, and grows the excited flame.
The place, the hour I bless, and happiest name,
When on Worth's height I gazed, with wonder keen;
And say, "my soul, that such thy boast has been,
"To the kind gods unmeasured thanks proclaim.
"From her the love-created fancies spring,
"That point to Heaven's perfection, and calm joy;
"Not the unworthy cares that man employ:
"From her derived, do the pure raptures buoy
"Thy thought, and lift thee to the immortal ring;
"Which yet I seek, on Hope's aspiring wing."

SESTINA.*

To every animal that dwells on earth,
Unless those few that dread the blazing sun,
Fate has allotted, for their toil, the day;
But, when the heavens are lighted by the stars,
Some hie to sheds for shelter, some to woods,
There to enjoy their wish'd repose till morn.

And I, as soon as I behold the morn
Dispersing round the dews and shades o'er earth,
And calling forth the beasts from all the woods,
Perceive no cheerful influence in the sun;
Then, when I flaming see the nightly stars,
I only weep, and languish for the day.

When dusky evening then succeeds the day,

* The lines of the Sestina terminate, in every stanza, in the same words, of *two* syllables; but, from the structure of an Italian verse, those words seem properly rendered by a monosyllable in English.

Within this land, and makes another's morn,
Pensive I gaze at the relentless stars,
That fashion'd me from much too feeling earth;
And curse the day I first beheld the sun,
By which I seem a savage in the woods.

I truly think no beast has, in the woods,
Appear'd so terrible, by night or day,
As she I sigh for, where'er shines the sun;
Nor do I pause for evening, or for morn;
For, though I am a mortal piece of earth,
The strong desire I feel is from the stars.

Before I may ascend to you, bright stars,
Or seek below the lover's myrtle woods,
Leaving my body, then but mouldering earth,
May I obtain her pity! Joy, one day,
Will balance years of pain, and ere the morn,
Content, announced me by the setting sun.

With her first witness'd by the setting sun,
Might I remain, and only see the stars
During one night, and might it ne'er be morn;
Nor might she, to that honour of the woods

Transform'd, escape my love, as on that day,
When Phœbus follow'd her below on earth.

But deep in earth, my coffin from the woods
Brought, I should lie, and day exhibit stars,
Ere such a glorious morn display the sun.

SONNET

ON SENDING TO A FRIEND A PAIR OF PIGEONS, WHICH, BEING THEN FREQUENTLY EMPLOYED IN FIELD SPORTS, HE HAD CAUGHT WITH NETS.

REE, at the foot of that well-peopled hill,*
On which the unrivall'd beauty had been born,
Ere him who sends us, captives thus forlorn,
e troubled, waking oft, and weeping still,
e pass'd our lives, and wing'd the air at will;
Nor less had any creature cause to scorn
Its fate, nor any sign appear'd, to warn
, thoughtless wretches, of approaching ill.
t, after those enjoyments we possess'd,

* Where Avignon was situated.

Yet, at the rueful pass we have attain'd,
Awaiting Death, we still on Hope can rest:
By the sweet prospect of revenge sustain'd,
We see our captor pining too, oppress'd
By Love, and by more fearful fetters chain'd.

SONNET

TRAVELLING THROUGH THE FOREST OF ARDEN.

THROUGH this inhospitable, shaggy wild,
Even terrible to those begirt with arms,
I pass securely, whom my Sun alarms
Alone, Love's dreaded influence beaming mild;
And sing, in self-command a very child,
Her whom my fancy, blind to threaten'd harms,
Sees, with her comrades fair, supreme in charms.
The firs and beeches, by its force beguiled,
I think her train; I hear her, when I hear
The branches rustle, the fond birds complain,
And rapid rivulets murmur through the mead.
Grateful with gloom and silence might appear
These lonely woods, and soothing to my pain,
Did I not now my Sun's glad presence need.

SONNET.

The loneliest fields, a pensive wanderer grown,
I tread, with solitary steps and slow,
And round my anxious eyes, inquiring, throw,
The tracks of men to avoid, wherever shewn.
No other means are to Invention known
From looks too curious to conceal my woe,
For in my secret breast what passions glow
Each gesture tells, and what I still bemoan.
Thus mountains now, methinks, and silent plains,
Thus woods, thus rivers, learn that rueful state,
Which I from every living witness hide:
Yet neither wild nor rugged path restrains
Intrusive Love, that, sent by cruel Fate,
Still walks, and still discourses, by my side.

SONNET

ON THE RECOVERY OF LAURA FROM A DANGEROUS ILLNESS.

Now was the star of Venus in the east
Seen high, and that which could so jealous make

Imperial Juno, view'd its place to take
Among the northern fires, admired not least.
The industrious housewife, timely slumber ceased,
Her dress scarce huddled on, was bent to rake
The smother'd embers; nor less soon awake,
The Lover on his pleasing pain to feast;
When my fair mistress, in her sad estate,
Enter'd my thoughts; not by the accustom'd way,
Which Sleep kept closed, as Sorrow had bedew'd;
(How changed, alas, her looks!) and seem'd to say,
"Take heart, be hopeful of a better fate:
"These eyes by you will, as they wont, be view'd

ODE

TO STEPHEN COLONNA THE YOUNGER, MADE SENATOR OF ROME FOR FIVE YEARS.

HEROIC spirit, that thy seat on high
Hast left, to animate terrestrial clay,
And form a mortal, prudent, bold, and wise;

* Before the publication of the Memoires de Petrarque, it was supposed most generally to be addressed to Rienzi, the famous tribune.

Since thou hast now attain'd the sovereign sway,
And canst in Rome the arts of empire try,
To bid it to its ancient honour rise,
On thee, I call; for, save in thee, my eyes
Perceive not Virtue (which from earth seems flown)
Nor even the very shame that Vice inspires.
Howe'er now Italy a change desires
Or seeks, her state seems to herself unknown,
Decrepit, dull, and torpid grown.
Is she in everlasting slumber bound?
O might my vigour lift her from the ground!

No; she will never, from her slumber deep,
Grasp'd by her hair, at such a warning voice,
Be rouzed: such heaviness ensures her doom!
But doubtless 'tis by Heaven's peculiar choice
That thou, whose efforts can dispel her sleep,
Hast, in thy care, her head, our honour'd Rome.
Firm in those venerable locks presume
To plant thy hand, that now dishevell'd* trail,
Till the raised sluggard on her feet be set.
I, that her sufferings day and night regret,
Hope only by thy labours to prevail.

* This alludes to the disunited state of Rome.

If Mars's people do not fail
Their elevated aims revived to see,
That high advantage will be due to thee.

Those ancient walls, the pilgrim yet beholds
With pleasure and with dread, when times long past,
And many splendid triumphs he revolves;
With tombs of those, whose actions will outlast
Even what man's perishable dust infolds,
Famed till the fabric of the world dissolves;
And whate'er works one ruin nŏw involves,
Warn thee Rome's ancient glories to renew.
Just Brutus, warlike Scipios, when, though rare,
One rules, who makes it, in these days, his care,
What joy shall, in the shades, descend to you!
How, ravish'd at the tidings new,
Will old Fabricius triumph, and exclaim,
" My Rome again shall spread abroad its fame!"

And if ethereal spirits can endure
Their thoughts from scenes celestial to estrange,
And meditate on what is done below;
Grieved at long civil feuds, from thee a change

They now expect, while, ever insecure,
To worship Heaven none unmolested go;
And places, once so sacred, dwellings grow
Of violence, and seem but dens of thieves.
There entrance only is refused the good;
And, where the shrines and altars lately stood
So rich, the world new horrors plann'd perceives,
He scarce, who knew the past, believes,
And bells excite to arms, that only hung
Aloft, the signal of Devotion, rung.

The weeping Female Train, with clamour loud,
Weak Age and Childhood, whom the light of day
Grieves, and whate'er abhorr'd Existence shews;
Religious Brothers, white, and black, and gray;
And all, however by Affliction bow'd,
Call out, "O mighty Chief, relieve our woes!"
The wretches such unnumber'd harms disclose,
As, in a ruthless Hannibal, would wake
Pity for hated Rome: and, if we search
Around the fire that wraps the holy church,
Soon shall we see the fuel whence to take,
And how the blaze less powerful make;

The blaze of Passion, that so wide extends:
Do this; Heaven's blessing on the deed attends.

Though bears,* wolves, lions, eagles, serpents, all
Should try against a marble Column born,
To shake it, ill their strength the attempt would suit.
That senseless rage see Rome afflicted mourn,
And on thy active virtue loudly call,
Poor plants, with ardour, from the soil to root,
Bless'd, in a thousand years, with little fruit.
Those lofty spirits are not now beheld,
That made her glorious, as she was before;
O race, whose breasts, with anger I deplore,
Are now, against so great a mother, swell'd!
But thou, her father, husband, held,
Thy succour bring; for such good deeds, by one†
She claims alike, will now be left undone.

* The bears mean the Orsini family, from the word Orso. The rest are supposed to mean those families who united with them, in opposition to the Column, Colonna.

† "The Pope," as Gesualdo explains in his note, "who lives at Avignon, attentive to the spiritual go-"vernment, and not the republic, and is quite given up "to luxury, indifferent to the fate of Rome and Italy."

Seldom it happens that, to high designs
Propitious, Fortune cares the just reward
Of Worth to allot, as she now seeks to do:
But favours, with her rule that ill accord,
Scarce granted thee, to pardon so inclines,
I see her wrongs with patience, though not few.
The worthies of whom history boasts, ne'er knew
A road so clear to everliving Fame;
For thou preparest the Monarchy's return
To former greatness, if I well discern
True merit, kindled by its generous aim.
How will this praise exalt thy name,
"Others, its youth assisting, raised the state;
"He, while it totter'd beneath age's weight?"

On the Tarpeian hill thou wilt behold,
My song, a Chief, all Italy esteems,
Of others' good more thoughtful than his own.
Tell him, that one, to whom he is unknown,
Save by applauding Fame, yet worthiest seems,
Thus says, "with tears, pour'd forth in streams
"Through faded eyes, on thee does Rome, from all
"Her seven famed hills, for just compassion call."

MADRIGAL.*

A FOREIGN beauty touch'd my heart, whose face,
Love's genuine badge, declared her of his train.
(All others seem'd less worthy of her place.)
Whom following along the verdant grass,
These words I caught, at distance utter'd plain.
" Thou with lost labour through the wood wilt pass
" On this pursuit." Then in the shade I stood
Of a tall beech, and mused awhile, till soon
I saw around what dangers in the wood
Beset me, and return'd content at Noon.†

* Supposed the description of a warning, which he thinks effectual, from his confessor, father Dennis; who wrote to him, that it was unbecoming to lose his time, by the consequences of his passion.

† This allegory had been used by Dante. He means by Noon, the age of thirty-five years, as being half the age of a man, and likewise his own at that time.

SONNET.*

ON A MINIATURE OF LAURA, PAINTED FOR PETRARCH BY SIMON, A DISCIPLE OF GIOTTO.

That master, Policletus, and the rest
Whom History boasts, exerting all their art
A thousand years, could only shew a part
Of the unrivall'd grace that fires my breast;
But, surely, Simon, in the regions bless'd,
Had seen the beauteous sovereign of my heart,
And thus, among the sons of earth, we start
To see her lineaments so fair express'd.
This face is of some being in the sky,
A semblance true; not one, like us, whose soul
Is veil'd by cumbrous flesh from every eye:
My friend judged well, who could not form a whole
So various, where, less aided than on high,
The impediments of earth his sight control.

* This and the following sonnet, are those which Vasari speaks of, as a modern connoisseur would of Pope's epistle to Jervis; or, in other words, as a compliment paid by an eminent poet to an indifferent artist.

SONNET.

THE SAME SUBJECT.

When Simon first the precious work design'd,
That proved the wonders of his art for me,
O that his pencil could have bid me see
The senseless form endued with voice and mind!
My sighs less frequent I had joy'd to find,
Bereft of pleasure now, by Fate's decree;
For, in this picture, cruel though she be,
She bears a countenance to peace inclined:
And when all wildly I address my speech
To her, she seems to listen without pain,
And grant due pity, as I then beseech.
How might, Pygmalion, the reflection teach
To thee content, who couldst for ever gain
What I, one moment, wish within my reach!

SONNET.

Sennucio, let me tell thee how, kind friend,
I pass my days, and what a life is mine:

I burn as I was wont, condemn'd to pine
For Laura, and with Passion's force contend;
Here proud, here lowly, have I seen her bend
On me her eyes; to harshness now incline,
And now to pity; and her looks divine,
Joyful or sad, to scorn or kindness tend.
Here did she sweetly sing; here sate, and here
Was seen to turn, or sudden stop: here thrill'd
My soul with the bewitching look she gave:
Here spoke, or smiled, as I stood wondering near;
Or changed her air—with such reflections fill'd,
Love day and night torments his hapless slave.

SONNET.

HIS REASON FOR LOVING LAURA AT THIRTY, WHEN HER BEAUTY WAS IMPAIRED.

HER golden locks were in the wind display'd,
That blew them round a thousand graceful ways,
While in her eyes an undiminish'd blaze
Still beam'd; though now by Time less vivid made;
And pity, as I thought, her looks display'd,
But know not if, as true, it tempted praise:

That youth then fired my bosom, can it raise
In any wonder, with such fuel's aid?
'Twas not the motion of a mortal's form,
But something heavenly, and her speech's sound,
Unlike to what we hear on earth below.
'Twas some pure spirit; a bright sun, around
Appearing then to beam its influence warm;
Nor * can it heal the wound to unstring the bow.

SONNET.

ON PETRARCH'S PICKING UP A GLOVE LAURA HAD DROPPED AT AN ASSEMBLY, AND WHICH SHE HASTILY RECOVERED FROM HIM.

O BEAUTEOUS hand, that robb'st me of my heart,
Shewing whate'er I prize in narrow space;

* This line was chosen, a century afterwards, for his motto, by a king of Naples, on his queen's death.

" Le roi Rène apres la mort d'Isabeau de Lorraine,
" sa premiere femme, prit cette devise:
" Un arc turquois avec la corde rompue, et le dernier
" vers de ce sonnet:
" Piaga per allentar d'arco non sana."

MEM. DE PETRARQUE.

To form which, Nature in her work would place,
For her own fame, and Heaven's, her utmost art:
Clear, pearly whiteness that, o'er every part
Conspicuous, givest to killing fingers grace,
Know, Love consents my eager eyes should trace,
Beauties late hid, a destined joy to impart.
Thou snowy, fair embroider'd, graceful glove,
Yet mourn'd, where ivory shines and roses glow,
Too oft, who could an equal prize divine?
Thus might the veil become a spoil of Love!
O strange vicissitude of things below,
Have possess'd the treasure—yet resign.

SONNET.

SOLITARY life I ever sought,
(The fields, the woods, and rivers know it well,)
Flying those sordid souls, their stars compel
To lose the path by Heaven and Virtue taught:
And had my former project come to aught,
Far from soft Tuscan * air, I now should dwell

* About the time of Petrarch's birth, his family was driven from Florence by an army of the French under

Where the wild hills around my river swell,
Sorga,* that nurses sad poetic thought;
But Fortune, always adverse to my views,
Keeps me where, uninspired, I sing, and grieve
To see my treasure,† in the mire is thrown.
Yet late my hand was destined not to lose
Its labour, but its full ‡ reward receive,
By Love, and by myself, and Laura, known.

Philip le Bel, by whom it was proscribed, as well as, among many others, the great Dante. Petrarch at seven months old was carried across the Arno, as Camilla was carried by Metabus, according to Virgil.

* He had by this time, as is here seen, established himself at Vaucluse; the fountain of which has been poetically described on the spot by Sir William Jones, in his Elegy on Laura. See his Poems.

† Meaning Laura in the vicious city of Avignon.

‡ I have translated this unintelligible passage conformably to the idea of its general meaning, suggested by the author of the Memoires de Petrarque; supposing that Laura had condescended to shake hands with her lover.

ODE*

WRITTEN AT LAURA'S FAVOURITE FOUNTAIN.

LIMPID, cool, untainted spring,
Where her limbs she often laved
Whom only I acknowledge fair;

* The author of the Memoires argues very well to prove, that it was not the fountain of Vaucluse, as it was thought probably at the time Sir William Jones translated the ode with this opinion. As this therefore was, I believe, in his youth, it gives me a better excuse for translating it after one who, though he had a mind so comprehensive, yet had an ear equally harmonious. I may be excused, by the same reason, for seeing in some few parts, however beautiful the rest, a want of absolute perfection; and, in particular, for remarking, that at the beginning, it was not worth while to give the translation a sense *opposite* to the original, in order to suggest the idea of *warm water*. That the reader may completely judge of the carelessness of Voltaire, alluded to by Sir William Jones, in speaking of this ode, I refer him to the notes of the Memoires de Petrarque, Vol. II.

Boughs, that to remembrance bring
Sadly, as ye bending waved,
How her reclining form ye bare;
Turf, and, worthiest to wear,
Flowers that, plucking, she disposed
O'er her robe and bosom seen;
Air, enchantingly serene,
Where Love my wounds afresh unclosed;
O attend while I complain,
Assembled here, to my last dying strain.

If, while I with Love apace
Pine, Heaven still, unpitying, choose
To see me victim proved of Grief,
Do not, in this haunt, a place
To my ashes cold refuse.
For when the spirit's fled, belief
They shall here repose, relief
Will at my last moments yield:
Here possess'd of Peace, in port
Mariners sea-wearied court,
Preserve them, by some stone reveal'd,
Sad remains of one whom woes
Had harass'd once, but left in safe repose.

Haply to her favourite spot
May the cruel fair return,
On whom all hopes I cherish rest;
And, astonish'd, then my lot,
Casting round her eyes, discern,
Where I that day, for ever bless'd,
Hail'd entranced: O then her breast
Love or Pity sure will touch,
And the soft, escaping sigh
Heard, to Heaven shall plead on high
For my long errors,* known too much;
Drooping as the fair it spies,
And drying with her veil her beauteous eyes.

From the flaunting branches fell
Scatter'd leaves of many a flower
On her, who cast an angel's look,
Sitting, I remember well,

* The turn given to this passage is countenanced by the commentary in Vellutello's edition. It is suitable likewise to the poet's customary censure of his passion, and to the spirit of his introductory sonnet, "Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse," &c.

Cover'd with the amorous shower.
Some upon her robe they shook;
Some their way to tresses took,
And as gems in gold appear'd:
On the fountain's margent green
Some were, early, settling seen;
While others, o'er the soil revered,
Frolic circles form'd above,
And seem'd to cry, "Here reigns almighty
"Love!"

Often did I then exclaim,
Awed by her sweet presence, "Sure
"'Tis one of the celestial band!"
So with air divine the dame,
With fair features, and the lure
Of magic smiles that none withstand,
Born our wonder to command,
Recollection charm'd away,
That, unconscious, with a sigh,
"Whence," I said, "and where am I?"
And seem'd to Heaven convey'd that day.
Since it pass'd, no place can please
Save this; here only I exist in ease.

If thou wert tuneful as sincere,
Boldly might'st thou quit, my song,
The woods, and mix among the courtly throng.

SONNET

EMBARKING ON THE PO, IN HIS WAY TO VERONA.

Well may'st thou bear these limbs, majestic Po,
At will, upon thy powerful, rapid waves;
But the free spirit that informs them braves
The strong compulsion of all power below,
And without need of skill, the way to show
To that bless'd branch,* whose presence still it craves,
Hastening, itself with outstretch'd pinions saves
From thee, though wind and oars their aid bestow.
Great king of rivers, proud, presumptuous stream,
That thwart'st† the Sun, when he brings on the day,

* Of laurel, *i. e.* Laura.

† The course of the Po being east, it moved towards the sun, and from Laura.

And leav'st the West, though thence more ra-
diance beam;
Thou what is mortal of me may'st convey;
But all the rest (nor thou, horn'd flood, misdeem)
By Love is wing'd, and homeward takes its way.

SONNET

TRAVELLING HOMEWARDS FROM ITALY, ON THE BANKS OF THE RHONE.

O RAPID flood, that, from thy fountain hoarse,
Through Alpine deserts *gnawing*,* whence thy
name,
Advancest night and day, our path the same,
Where Love leads me, thee only Nature's course;
Roll on (for sleep thou stay'st not, the resource
Of human Toil) and ere the ocean's claim
Thou yield, delay where greener meads proclaim,
In a serener air, enchantment's force.
There shines my living Sun with favouring ray,
And gladdens, on thy left, the bordering flowers:
Perhaps (O chance desired!) she mourns my stay.

* Deriving it from the Latin and Italian, "rodere."

Kiss her light feet, or hand, among those bowers.
Tell her (and let that kiss, like language, say)
* "My will is prompt, but tardy are my powers."

SONNET

ON THE GRIEF OF LAURA, SUPPOSED FOR THE DEATH OF HER MOTHER.

I saw a simple mortal shew, at will,
Angelic graces, so endow'd alone:
The recollection dear, though sad, is grown,
Nor can aught else the mind so justly fill.
Yes; tears I saw from sparkling eyes distil,
That Sol might envy, in full lustre shewn;
And potent plaints seem'd utter'd, in a tone
To make the mountains move, and streams stand still.
Grace, Feeling, Prudence, Dignity, and Grief,
Lamenting then, a sweeter concert made
Than blesses man, when Music yields relief;
And so the air by Virtue's sound was sway'd,
It was attentive all, and not a leaf,
Stirring, one moment's careless pause betray'd.

* The scriptural expression is here softened.

SONNET

ON A DISTINCTION SHEWN TO LAURA BY A PRINCE, SUPPOSED TO BE CHARLES SON OF THE KING OF BOHEMIA, AND AFTERWARDS THE EMPEROR CHARLES THE FOURTH.

One of rare powers, as of a royal race,
Unclouded judgment, and a lynx's eye,
Full in whose view the future seems to lie,
Has proved how little deeds his fame disgrace;
And, when gay dames assembled in the place
By mirth allotted for the occasion high,
Among so many beauteous, could espy,
Without confusion, the most perfect face.
The fair in crowds sought forth, polite as wise,
To Age and Rank superior, with his hand
He mark'd his wish, and with attentions due
Approaching, kiss'd her forehead and her eyes;
An honour, praised by all the unbiass'd band;
But filling me with envy at the view!

SONNET

ON A WATER-PARTY OF LADIES, AMONG WHOM WAS LAURA, GOING DOWN THE RHONE IN A BOAT, AND RETURNING IN A CARRIAGE.

Twelve dames, with toil not unbecoming worn,
Rather twelve stars, and in the midst a Sun,
I saw sit gaily in a bark, that none
Ere equall'd, on a buoyant current born.
Seeking that sheep now Finery had shorn
To load its dress,* not Jason enter'd one
So glorious, nor the swain, by whom undone
Troy is yet doom'd its cruel fate to mourn.
In a triumphal car where, with delight,
All listen'd; then my Laura to the rest
Sung sweetly, seated from the troop not far,
As home they moved. O what a glorious sight!
To steer the bark, how, Typhis, wast thou bless'd,
And thou Automedon, to guide the car.

* This is supposed to censure the fashions of the age.

SONNET.

THAT window where my Sun is often seen
Refulgent, and the world's at morning's hours;*
And that, where Boreas blows, when Winter lowers,
And the short days reveal a clouded scene;
That bench of stone where, with a pensive mien,
My Laura sits, forgetting beauty's powers;
Haunts where her shadow strikes the walls or flowers,
And her feet press the paths or herbage green:
The place where Love assail'd me with success,

* These particulars are related of Laura's house: Maurice de Seves, in 1540, says, that in the Fauxbourg of the Cordeliers, a small ancient house, built with yellow stone, was called Laura's house. It was watered by the Sorga, and was the second house to the left in the Fauxbourg, after passing the portail Peint. It adjoined to a tavern called the Cheval Blanc, and which was in existence not long before 1764, the date of the Memoires de Petrarque.

And Spring, the fatal time that, first observed,
Revives the keen remembrance every year;
With looks and words, that o'er me have preserved
A power, no length of time can render less,
Call to my eyes the sadly-soothing tear.

PETRARCH. PART II.

POEMS

AFTER THE DEATH OF LAURA.*

ODE.

If thou would'st have me suffer, Love, thy yoke,
Again (thy wish I see) new power begin
To shew, and fame unwonted win,
Lest at the trial I appear unbroke.
Fly to the sacred grave, and warm within
That heart, the seat of Virtue, and these eyes
Cheer with that mortal, fair and wise,
Whose loss now beggars, as she made me bless'd.
Yes; if 'tis justly by the world confess'd
Thy power to Heaven, and to the dark abyss
Below extends, (alas! in tracts remote,
Or other worlds, if we but note
That power surmised, we feel its force in this!)

* The day is mentioned in 1327, when Petrarch first saw Laura; and she died on the same day, in 1348.

Snatch from the cruel King his beauteous prey;
Again thy banners where she looks display.

Kindle those matchless eyes, again to beam,
Which were my honour'd guide, and the soft flame
That cheer'd the gloom of life, the same
That slumbering warms. How would it waking burn?
Never the wearied hart so eager came,
Athirst, to sip the fountain or the stream,
As I sought forth the charms, I deem
Will oft to mournful Memory return.
For sad Experience from the past may learn,
My raving thoughts are deaf to Reason's voice;
As among wildering ways decoy'd,
We follow one, till soon it mocks our choice.
Now at thy call to come I do not deign:
Beyond thy power presume no more to reign.

Let me again the tones harmonious hear,
(Truly to hear) I still in fancy can,
Which, when their magic work began,
The Passions lull'd, confess'd the power of song;

While thoughts distemper'd from the breast of man
Were charm'd away, nor aught seem'd gloomy near.
By this my verse was made to appear
Above itself, ne'er since so sweet or strong:
And to the mind as faculties belong
To call up forms unreal, let my eyes
And ears their proper objects joy to find.
While others all, of every kind,
Are only near, my life I lightly prize.
Vainly dost thou thy singled victim doom,
While his first love is shrouded in the tomb.

Let the sweet glance returning bless my sight,
That soften'd my vain pride, as beams the snow;
And let my happy fortune show
Thee placed near her who sends them to my heart.
Swift take thy golden dart, and take thy bow;
Bring her pronouncing words that wake delight,
And hearing which I learn'd aright
How stored with captivating charms thou art.
Bid not her tongue be still; that winning part
Had baits around to lure me, and which still
I crave; and plant on every side a snare

Within her light and curling hair:
I cannot without this thy power allow.
Spread with thy hands those tresses to the gales;
And then I may confess thy power prevails.

Ne'er might I from the golden snares be free
Of ringlets, left to charm with Nature's grace;
Nor from the influence of that face
Which with its sweet severity inthrall'd,
And busy Fancy still delights to trace;
Which kept for ever love unchanged in me;
As close to many a fading tree,
Those plants, of Venus and Apollo call'd!
But, since the gift of Liberty, appall'd
I have beheld, presented me by Death;
And thou canst find none else, whoe'er thou choose,
To second thy ambitious views,
My pride may dare thee till my latest breath.
Thy day is pass'd; if thou have lost the arms
I dreaded once, thy rage no more alarms.

Those arms were vivid eyes, whence tipp'd with fire
Darts show'ring, well-directed by thy hand,

Which Reason could not e'er withstand,
Fulfill'd Heaven's will; the charm of modest Mirth,
Or feeling Thought; Silence; or, at command,
Gay Laughter; courteous ways that awe inspire;
Chaste looks, and words we might desire
To banish Vice impure, as spells, from earth;
An air, as seen in one of heavenly birth,
Mildly benevolent, and often praised;
Grace, when she sate, or when she stood, in all
That doubt, which Memory can recall,
What winning posture most enchanted, raised;
Possess'd of arms thus victory to insure,
Thou madest me yield; but I am now secure.

O'er other souls Heaven gave thee power, to change
The object of their love in many ways;
Mine, of a different mould, obeys
Another law, Heaven's varied works to show.
Yet howe'er gain'd, no joy does Freedom raise;
But sad, I say, " O wont this region strange,
" Thy blissful mansion left, to range,
" What doom, pure spirit, plunging us in woe,
" Untimely call'd thee from the world below,
" Making regret arise from what we saw

"Of lofty Virtue, never equall'd yet?"——
I may not, Love, to thee submit,
Nor fear thy vengeance on my head to draw.
Thy bow thus strain'd, to pierce me vainly tries;
My safety's signal were her closing eyes.

Death has absolved me from thy laws,
O Love, since, for her heavenly dwelling, she
I mourn has left me sad and free.

SONNET.

How often to my long-beloved retreat
Hastening, where calm and peaceful all appears,
As soft I sigh, beneath my feeble feet
The well known sod I drench with trickling tears!
How often, wandering from my lonely seat,
To the wood's wild recesses, free from fears,
My thoughts I rivet on that aspect sweet
Death veils, nor hence his stroke invited hears!
Now, in the form of Nymph or Goddess fair,
From Sorga's waves emerging, while I gaze,
On the green bank I see her, seated there!

Now treading, as along the bank she strays,
The flowers, a beauteous mortal; and her air
Tells me, with pity she my state surveys!

SONNET.

ZEPHYR returns, and the mild Season, seen
With herbs and flowers, his pleasing train, in state;
Procne is heard, soft Philomel her fate
Laments, and Spring's own colours grace the scene.
The laughing flowers delight, and heavens serene:
Jove on his fairest daughter looks elate:
All creatures warn'd, through space, obedient wait
The will of Love, and own his impulse keen.
But, wretch, for me those sighs return alone
That with a wounded heart for her I send,
Who still in heaven retains it as her own:
And the sweet song of birds, and flowers that blend
All hues, and woman's gentle manners, grown
Importunate, like deserts dread offend.

THE TWELFTH PYTHIAN ODE OF PINDAR.

TO MIDAS OF AGRIGENTUM, VICTOR ON THE FLUTE.

1. 1.

PROPITIOUS hear, O happy seat
Of social Joy, the fairest * own'd
Of earthly towns, and Proserpine's retreat;
That placed, as on the banks enthroned
Of Agragas, behold'st thy vallies gay
With flocks and many a mirthful swain

* Mr. Green has omitted in his translation, the piece of history contained in the expression καλλίστα βροτείων πολέων; but I thought that not an uninteresting one, which shewed the general opinion of Agrigentum with respect to *beauty*, probably just before the taste and policy of Pericles had rendered Athens so unrivalled in the productions of art.

Subject to thee, and prosper'd by thy sway;
With Heaven's and Earth's kind will receive my strain:
Receive too, Midas, him it crowns, who bore
From Greece that Art's respected prize,
Pallas (the Gorgon weltering in her gore),
Invented from the monstrous kindred's cries,

1. 2.

Sadly their voice the prostrate dead
Bemoan'd, when Perseus could subdue
One of the three fierce sisters, and her head
His trophy, with its serpents, view.
For feats regretted wide, the Chief arrived
At sea-girt Seriphus, his wandering ceased:
The race* of Phorcus high, of sight deprived,
And Polydectes,† shuddering at his feast,
His mother's charms a master's prize survey'd,
Owed to the son of Danaë, on that day,
Their mournful fate, when, safe through mightier aid,
He bore Medusa's features fair away.

* The surviving Gorgons, Stheno and Euryala.

† A tribute being expected by this king from his guests, Perseus appeared, carrying the head of Medusa,

2. 1.

To him they owed it, sprung from Love
Celestial, and the golden shower;
But when his foe the Goddess, from above,
Sees vanquish'd by her heavenly power,
From plaintive sounds, that o'er a sister wakes
Euryala, while pleased her ears
Drink in their sweetness, lasting laws she makes
To rule the enchanting Art that mortals cheers.
Soon, perfect by her dexterous toil, conferr'd
On man, and hence an honour'd art,
'Tis at the games, in winning accents, heard
To rouse with eager hope Ambition's heart:

2. 2.

Soft as the skilful breath is born
Through well wrought brass, and slender reeds,
That near the city * of the Graces, torn
From their old haunts, the beauteous meads
And woods, Cephisus laving moves along,
Are doom'd to witness festive joy and mirth
In the light dance, and in the fervid song.
Fame without toil is hopeless here on earth:

* Orchomenus, a city of Bœotia, sacred to the Graces.

Yet, unexpected oft, as late * to thee,
Success arrives, and, by Heaven's awful will,
While oft the vain their labour fruitless see,
New prospects sad Despair with comfort fill.

TRANSLATION OF A LATIN ODE BY GRAY.

O DOOM'D the barbarous seats with me
To visit, where disturb'd we see
Strife's restless look, and hear his sound,
And the gownmen bustle round;

Say, how much better, in the shade
Of some old elm reposing laid,
In books all irksome thoughts to lose,
And invoke the friendly Muse?

For oft I chase the thoughts away
Of Care, as o'er the fields I stray

* He had gained the victory, as the Scholiast says, after breaking his instrument.

In sweet poetic trance, and leave
Scarce the dewy scene at eve.

And in each hill, where'er I go,
Parnassus seems his woods to shew
Outstretch'd; and in each fountain clear
Aganippe cool appear.

Spring and the sportive Nymphs have smiled
To spy me in recesses wild,
Scenting the violets, that there
Load with sweets the morning air;

As, thrown at random on the grass,
I mark the playful current pass,
That, gently check'd by many a stone,
Sends a pleasing plaintive tone.

Thus, when the Season's earliest flowers
Were seen, I pass'd the artless hours,
As long as Zephyr to each eye
Free from clouds preserved the sky.

Nor yet I leave the fields, and ease;
Nor Phœbus more would Clitie please.

(Though now the winds are cold and rude,
And the summer changing view'd.)

For when on rural labours gay,
On plains and hills, he shoots his ray,
Tinging the East with gold afar,
And purple, from his radiant car;

Wistful I mark his wondrous course;*
Nor less when, with abated force,
He spreads, where Calpe's rocks aspire,
Sweet his temper'd hues of fire:

Till by degrees his lustre grown
More languid, scarcely now are shown
The gaudy clouds, nor shortly seen,
Fades at once the landscape green.

O happy were I (nor might then
My fortune be to rise again!)

* This poetical idea is in a rejected stanza of the Elegy.—

"Him have we seen ———
"With wistful eyes pursue the setting sun."

If falling thus, in death so bless'd,
I could sink in peace to rest!

No envy should I bear the God,
When by his steeds Olympus trod
Beheld him, with whole rays on high
Dazzle each admiring eye.

LATIN ODE

WRITTEN AT THE GRAND CHARTREUSE, BY THE SAME.

Thou guardian of the solemn place,
Whate'er thy name, (for none, I deem,
Of import light art thou, whose trace,
By Time adorn'd with awful grace,
Thy groves declare, and native stream.

And clearer far the God is seen
O'er pathless rocks, the desert height,
Or where, the craggy steeps between,
Wild waves enliven all the scene,
And foliage spreads the gloom of night,

(Though now the winds are cold and rude,
And the summer changing view'd.)

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Wild waves enliven all the scene,
And foliage spreads the gloom of night,

Than had he, beneath roofs, forsooth,
From citron hewn, in gold the art
Of Phidias proved, and Sculpture's truth)
O hail! and to a wearied youth,
That calls thee, Quiet's balm impart.

Spots thus retired, and Silence sweet,
Should Fortune still my hopes deny;
And toss'd again where billows beat,
Compel me other toils to meet,
Unwilling, and the haven fly:

At least, O Power, the days of Age
Give me to pass, from hind'rance free,
Where Nature sooths Reflection sage;
And leave the loud dissentious rage
Of crowds, and life's anxiety.

FINIS.

A

REPLY TO THE STRICTURES

OF THE

MONTHLY REVIEWERS,

IN FEBRUARY, 1797.

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REPLY TO THE STRICTURES

OF THE

MONTHLY REVIEWERS,

IN FEBRUARY, 1797,

ON THE TRAGEDY OF

HE BATTLE OF EDDINGTON.

By J. PENN, Esq.

INCLUDING

BOTH AN ABSTRACT AND SUPPLEMENT OF HIS CRITICAL WORKS ON THE DRAMA.

Juvat integros accedere fontes.

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1797.

A REPLY, &c.

A VERY few years ago it is known to have been the uncontroverted opinion of the generality of dramatic critics, and seemed to be the opinion of all, that, whether from a defect of taste in the audience, or from a want of adequacy to its object in the species of exhibition, the simple tragedy, which confines itself to a single place, and in which the whole of the fable is supposed to take up a portion of time no longer than twenty-four hours, could not, with any hopes of success, be brought upon the English stage. That it was a dull and heavy sort of composition, necessarily deficient in that variety which the drama required, and which was imagined to result very naturally from a transgression of all the unities, except that of action, seemed the character it most frequently bore: nor had any means been suggested of otherwise providing that constant amusement it was thought incapable of producing at the theatre, or of giving

effect to the qualities peculiar to it, of extreme simplicity and perspicuity.

Had this unexpected object been attained alone; had a play so written been received at the theatres royal with applause, it would evidently deserve to be considered and acknowledged a curious circumstance; and the critics, who had held this sort of play to be "sacred to sleep," and triumphantly asserted, that it had never succeeded, would be compelled, if they were candid, to own the mistake they were led into in attempting to foresee impossibility of success, and in damping the ardour of enterprise directed towards the improvement of a liberal art.

But the *Battle of Eddington* has not only done this: it has confined its subject, not to twenty-four, but to *two or three* hours. A fictitious action of that length, and in one spot, is supposed (improbably perhaps) a faithful representation of a real one, of the same length, and in one spot; the portrait is made *strangely* and *unnaturally* like its original. The difficulty of all this is far increased by borrowing no assistance from love, which the Samson Agonistes alone, of all our simple plays,

had before refrained from. The trial of its effect was not at the winter theatres, where "the tones of "an actor," or the advantages of good scenery, might recommend it; but, unluckily for the *Monthly Reviewers*, though not "in a barn," yet "by strollers;" and I agree with them, it was the most perfect trial that could be had.* The only reason I could have wished it acted at the winter theatres, is the general prejudice in favour of plays which have been so, and the celebrity which would have been reflected by this on the really just principles upon which it was constructed.

After this work of supererogation, I will not ask the critics for that degree of approbation which has even without it appeared due; but, since something ought to be decided upon, and since the discouragement this tragedy experienced from periodical works and newspapers of all sorts was such, while the support it received from friends was so trifling, if they will say positively, that *nothing* has been done but what had been foreseen by them in the repeated

* The reason why it succeeded is obvious. It is only declamation that depends much upon the tones of an actor; incident employs his thoughts; and hence the worst will often deliver himself pleasingly, because naturally.

applause of an audience; that the favourable reception of the tragedy was *not* contrary to the opinions they had expressed; and that, in short, their notion of the taste of a British audience must *not* appear much less accurate since the performance and publication of the Battle of Eddington.

What I have said, in my *Letters* on the *Drama*, upon the subject of stage effect, seems twisted as much as any thing, so as to place my system in an unfavourable point of view. The caution with which I explained every part, however great, could not be supposed such as to preclude all possibility of erroneous objection; but rather than attribute to it an approbation of frivolous stage effect, the critics ought to perceive its object is to create one of a very different sort, which requires most respectable poetical talents *to excel in*. All that *I* have done is carefully to collect its neglected and misused characters, to give them order and meaning, and to fix them

Ne turbata volent rapidis ludibria ventis.*

To write upon this plan, seems less consulting fri-

* Flitting leaves, the sport of every wind,
Lest they disperse in air our empty fate. DRYDEN.

olous stage effect, than to change the scene dur-
ng a piece does; which is not only to amuse by
ecoration without any mental effort, but virtually
o confess that we avoid that mental effort, because
ur imagination or our resolution, is unequal to it.
Favourite maxims and observations are known
o give the greatest satisfaction to a British au-
ience. These, it was my plan to transform to clas-
ical beauties, like the sentences of Lucan, to have
hem introduced into the plot with the same judg-
ent as the incidents, and even by adapting them
ith equal art to the characters, operate materially
n the fable. If it is objected, that I am deviating
om the true end of tragedy in this, I shall by no
eans allow it, even upon the principles of the
jectors. Johnson observes, in speaking of Dry-
en's ode, that diamonds cannot string and hold
gether diamonds. There must be some meaner
terial made use of for this purpose; and in few
the dramas they could produce, will there be
und a considerable number of scenes, highly
rought, whatever boast there may be of regard
the more splendid dramatic qualities. Now it is
ly the intermediate scenes I would wish any part

of devoted to this stile of writing, unless indeed it could be happily introduced elsewhere. This setting, therefore, may not be less proper to give lustre to dramatic jewels of the first water, than ornaments more precious, and nearer also to their nature, though of ill-according figure and appearance.

But I am far from allowing, that the success of my tragedy has been chiefly promoted, or its original structure chiefly instanced, by the style here spoken of. There is another part of the *setting*, which can never subject the workmanship to like strictures. Supposing, that not one passage had been of this character, yet the reception of the piece would have been very little inferior to what it was. It is by *laying the plot deeper* than any other, that effect has been, for the first time, given to simplicity; and that critics of delicate taste have at length a means of seeing compositions, which possess nothing to them disgusting, obtain the favour of the public. The darts of censure which light upon that part of stage effect (if such it can be called), which results from action, cannot strike it singly, but must pitch likewise upon that natural progress of the fable, which is intimately interwoven with it

It is by the course of events that situations are produced which form pictures upon the stage, and which are often, too, pictures characterized by pity and terror. Every tragedy must present to the eye a certain number of these pictures; and the question of propriety is only relative to their number. It is even, I take it, by the greater frequency of these, that the English drama has any peculiar advantage, or contributed, in any respect, to the advancement of the art: and this may appear evident on taking a survey of each of the theatres, which have been distinguished by superior genius in tragedy as well as comedy, and have been most probably unequalled by the efforts of every other nation, ancient and modern: I mean the Greek, the French, and the English theatres.

I shall premise, that there are two principles of the human mind, extremely necessary here to be taken into consideration; one of which is the disposition discernible in poets, to take pleasure in the expression of thought by words, from which they may be taxed, like those who are loquacious in conversation, with the love of hearing their own voices; and the other, that dislike of the labour of thought itself, which

is common likewise to them, and people in every situation in life. These principles obviously tend to increase the quantity of declamation, and to diminish that of incident, in a tragedy.

In my notes lately published, on the Treatise of Ranieri di Calsabigi, I have shown the number of scenes in a regular play, to be pretty nearly in proportion to the quantity of action in it. In a former critical work I have surmised, that it might be owing in part to the pomp of theatrical apparatus that the Greek play was well received, though (according to this rule) so very declamatory, and I have found no reason to alter my opinion. Another circumstance might be mentioned too, which is the custom of varying the species of music, from time to time, during the performance, so that a person entering the theatre at any time, would be able to find out, merely from the music, what part of the play was at the time acting. It must be apparent, that the natural heaviness of the Greek drama would by these means be exceedingly relieved, and the exquisite pathos of certain scenes would be waited for without impatience; but though, added to all this, the poet's labour was spared, much, as

have supposed, to his satisfaction, yet a check was given to improvement in the art, and the inert splendour of the spectacle, co-operating with varied melody, gave premature content to audiences, which, had the same tragedies been represented before them in the modern way, might gradually have made good poets feel the necessity of being obliged only for the effect of their pieces, in future, to the respectable resources of the human mind.

For, indeed, it appears, that when a more natural mode of performing tragedies was established, the French could not otherwise keep up attention at the theatres of Paris, than by increasing the action half as much again, or the scenes from about twenty to above thirty. Even then many attempts were made by Lamotte, and other literati, to discredit and to decry the custom which prevailed of following the example of simplicity the Greeks had set; but the great merit of authors who had pursued that method, the learning, and even the dogmatism which was naturally called forth in support of it, in a country proud of the cultivation of literature, kept alive respect for propriety in the structure of the drama; and happily did so, since Eng-

land was at the same time ensuring to the world those advantages of experiment, for which opposite dramatic opinions prepared the way.*

With the example of Shakspeare before them, the English poets had but little motive to court restraint. They nevertheless increased the action of the drama, on discovering an easy method. Reason presently suggested to those who might still indulge their natural repugnance to labour, that additional variety being readily attainable, was also desirable. They changed the scene, in the course of a play, to any distant place, where an interesting action, connected with the subject, might be represented, and by these means became more habitually attentive to the employment of *shewing*, than that of *describing*, what was done. One consequence of this was, by shortening the speeches, to call off the eyes of the spectators as little as possible, from what was passing; and a very striking difference between the English and French theatres, which marks the improvement in the drama owing to the former, is a

* May their political experiments, for still stronger reasons, be opposite!

superiority in the number of its scenes of nearly half those of the latter. It is not our custom of violating the rules of Aristotle, but these circumstances incident to it, of which we have any just reason to boast. The change of scene may be compared to the display of that inert theatrical pageantry, which satisfies an audience without expence of thought; and which has been mentioned as a probable reason why the drama at Athens did not advance more rapidly towards perfection.

Few hints had been given, till of late years, for making in this art the improvement which was necessary. There is nothing in the works of the ancients that points more towards it than those lines of Horace;

Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.*

Dr. Warton, in slightly glancing at the subject of the drama, has dropped a sentiment favourable to it, where, condemning the declamation of the French, he speaks of *action*, as what ought to be

* Cold is the tale———
Filling the soul with less dismay and fear,
Than where spectators view, like standers by,
The deed, &c.

relied upon by the poet in preference. Voltaire, who knew its general nature, and who loved tragedy, if possible, better than deism, might perhaps have exhibited it to the world, had he had a British audience to direct him: but though the question seems to have been agitated in France, whether the drama, which professes to represent the actions of men, ought not to be more sparing of the verbal expression of sentiments, Marmontel determines it in the negative. The French critics, whose good sense deserves praise, seemed apprehensive, before the experiment was made, that poetry and rational composition could no longer have place in works of this sort, and that such new performances must exclusively take possession of their stage, as we find prevail upon ours; though, as I have shown lately, their almost exclusive prevalence is not owing to their authors, who, however they may deserve little praise, have not deserved discouragement.

For by their steady rejection of rule, they have been at liberty to fish out and discover the taste of an audience; and this, especially with a full gallery, I shall ever contend to be the taste of nature. Let us only observe what has been esteemed pro-

priety in common conversation, and reason from analogy; we shall see, that what is first desired in a companion, is an union of the strictest good sense, with the gayest and most agreeable temper. In him there is nothing to perplex our choice; but how will it be if the alternative be to assort either with the serious talker, who rounds his periods well, and shews sense, but is determined, in spite of the company, to be its orator; and the thoughtless buffoon, who is good humoured and accommodating, without any natural strength of mind? I do not doubt that, after a pause, even the puns of one will be preferred in mixed company, to the arguments of the other. I have always, upon this principle, been surprized, that the most flimsy farce, which promotes good humour at the theatre, to which people go so professedly for amusement, should not be preferred there to a heavy play, the production of which required much greater powers. That it is the taste of nature, may be inferred too from its long continuance. False taste in manners, and in literature, is of short duration; but the propensity of an audience to receive pleasure from dramatic works erring against the rules of criticism yet possessing effect, is not grown weaker

since the days of Dryden, or even of Shakespeare; and how consistent this is with the disapprobation of every thinking man who judges of many of those works as productions of human genius, is pointed out in my notes to the translation of Ranieri di Calsibigi's essay.

This ingenious critic has thrown more light than any other person, upon the improvement of which the drama stands in need. I was immediately struck by his idea, that a tragedy ought to be "a "series of pictures (pictures which will restrain the "conversation to that small quantity which is indis- "pensably necessary to characterize the persons, "and to conduct them into those picturesque si- "tuations, which strike and affect the minds of "spectators)." Frequent attendance at the theatre after the perusal of this treatise, enabled me to form a clear idea of the means necessary to produce such a tragedy; which I did; and the novelty of it is demonstrably proved by the extraordinary number of the scenes, which is proportionate to the extraordinary number of the incidents. It must be evident from this, that what I have mentioned as the real improvement of the drama due to this country, did not result from a rejection of critical

rules; for the Battle of Eddington plainly proves, that change of scene is by no means necessary to enrich a tragedy with incidents, and makes it obviously proper to say to the poet "quod petis hic est;"* and to warn him that it is acting more suitably to his character, as a poet, to exercise his imagination than his memory.

I think it natural that some people of general good taste should here make two remarks.

The first is: has not quantity of incidents been sometimes censured as a departure from simplicity? How then can it be praised where simplicity is also praised? I answer, that by means of duplicity of plot, irregularity of conduct, and change of scene, incidents may have appeared too numerous, and have been so with those assistances to confusion and perplexity; but I doubt whether, if a drama, the fullest of incidents, had closely adhered to all the unities, it could ever have appeared the worse for their number. Such dramas may exist, but have not existed hitherto.

The second is: must not a style of writing, marked with a degree of pathos, employed in unfolding characters, and though dwelling somewhat

* What you seek is here.

at length upon subjects, yet rendered delightful to the reader by beautiful poetry, be banished finally from the tragic drama?—I answer, yes; but this is the mere twilight of pathos; and a lustre, artificial, though equally agreeable to reason and nature, must be called in, to direct our eyes with certainty towards the objects presented to us. It may here be said, "I will not then shut out a light so much "to my taste; nor forego the pleasure of contem- "plating this season of calmness; 'tis then

> "——— the pleasant time,
> "The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
> "To the night-warbling bird, that now awake
> "Tunes sweetest his *love*-laboured song."

I answer again, the leaning expressed towards this calmness, or this sober melody, seems to argue *general* good taste; but like it for what it is, and do not pretend to discover in it a striking splendour, nor to see clearer in the dusky air. It is only the intenser pathos that has any thing dramatic in its character; and that which I contend prevails too much in tragedy, however soothing, is only of an elegiac temper. Those pathetic parts of the dramas where our poets "*higher* sung," I think

deserving of the highest praise; but instead of the rest, it cannot be thought unworthy of the greatest poets, to substitute a happy combination of well-imagined incidents, which, with the help of beauty and propriety of language, would give the utmost force to the strokes of nature which may be scattered over their tragedies.

It will be now I think acknowledged, that the Battle of Eddington cannot be rated, as the Monthly Reviewers rate it, below *the critical work which it accompanies*. To start a doubt concerning the justness of an universal opinion, such as was this, of the want of theatrical effect necessarily attached to Greek simplicity, may, considered abstractedly, indicate a love of singularity; to give good reasons for doing so, for entertaining that doubt, must prevent such an imputation; but by patient labour to produce, at the same time, an example to prove that the opinion was formed hastily, must be allowed both a greater mental and moral exertion. Nor does the phœnomenon only exist, but a reason is given why it should be equal to the effects ascribed to it. The Battle of Eddington, which has succeeded in a more complete manner than other

simple plays, shews a difference of structure proportionate to, and explanatory of, the difference of its reception. I was not likely to engage in a controversy on this point, till I could rest my arguments on demonstration; and though the managers, by *standing firm*, may withhold awhile an interesting piece of knowledge from many lovers of dramatic poetry, yet this play will at length, I doubt not, be esteemed curious, because a single instance of one exactly filled with action, in which whatever is superfluous in language is lopped off, and whatever is deficient in subject supplied. The scenes of the ancient tragedy revived, amount upon an average, to thirty-five; those of the English play to forty-five; and those of the Battle of Eddington to sixty-three. This extraordinary number is the necessary consequence of a deep-laid plot, such as it must be clear the nature of tragedy requires. I know nothing more satisfactory to me in this discovery, than the method it points out to the man of taste and education, of rendering his respectable compositions (even where the unities are violated) as pleasing to every part of an audience as pieces destitute of merit, which are tolerated for the sake of the spectacle. If such a perso

wish to know how his tragedy will be received, let him cast his eye over it. If he find it broken into scenes, to the degree here recommended, it is very well: otherwise he must add and interweave more incidents into it; for a tragedy formed upon the principles of the Battle of Eddington, is, to the same person, and done in the same manner, twice the labour of one formed upon those of any that has existed. But it is surely better for such a person to produce one tragedy that will gain him universal applause, than two, that will be at all neglected; and it is better likewise for the public, that compositions, in which good sense, and some vigour, are perceivable, should occasionally take place of such as are frequently performed, and are devoid of any. It may be said here, as Mrs. Montague very justly observes, that, "that is the easiest part of every art perhaps (but in poetry without dispute) in which the connoisseur can direct the artist." This is a true character of the mechanical part of dramatic poetry; but the Monthly Reviewers may recollect, good critics also allow that mechanical beauties give praise to the inventor, and the Battle of Eddington has *created* those

rules, to which it has been singular in its adherence. Whether they will think that union of perspicuity and force, which these rules communicate to the action, an advantage, I cannot say: this is incontestible, that in the instance where they are observed, if not by their means, the gallery have on a sudden become the loudest in their applause of a play, subjected to more rigid rules than Aristotle's; and the literati, who did not in general conceive this possible, may see reason to incline less to theory, and more to practice. Nor is too great a value set, in this public offering, on the base nature of stage-effect; which is attempted only to be made current by its admixture, in a just proportion, with the pure ore of mental exertion. I may not, in my building, have shown the happiest talent of combining classical and beautiful forms, but I have discovered such beauties to be in general separated by too much *dead wall*, and have hit luckily upon the right method of breaking it at intervals, and throwing the just degree of light and shade upon the complete front; so that the effect is wrought, not by deviating from, but giving characteristic spirit to simplicity and unity. Let us only consi-

der, with this mechanical help, what a transcendant and unrivalled creation a tragedy of Shakespeare's might have been, confined to the few hours in which Duncan's murder is planned and executed. Suppose that he had arrived late at night, that the murder had ensued, that the company had been alarmed by it very early; and that an immediate punishment of the guilty had instanced the observance of poetical justice. That Shakespeare could not (as reflection has taught me to think he could) have provided situations, in this case, as striking as any even in the play of Macbeth, can only be affirmed by those whose genius is as comprehensive as Shakespeare's was. This we must all allow, that in such a drama the mind is led more easily, and with less reflection, to seize what follows in the order of time; and that a series of events, equally interesting, must rush upon it with an irresistible force.

One may infer from the above general reasoning, that the Greek and French plays might be adapted to the taste of an English audience, and become more truly dramatic, if they were reduced with judgment in a contrary proportion to the number of their scenes. For instance, the usual

number of scenes in a tragedy of the common length, properly filled, being between sixty and seventy, the Greek play, which has twenty more or less, might be reduced to about one-third of its present length; and the French play, being thirty-five, to near one half. But these plays so reduced, when represented, would then have that advantage of brilliant taste and perspicuity, which only Mr. Mason's plays, and some others of our own, could, by a similar process, be made to exhibit on the stage.* In the two last paragraphs of my Letters on the Drama I had not yet perceived very strong reasons for numbering both the scenes and the lines, which I should certainly always do in future; for it is by the proportion which the former bears to the latter that the degree of action may be determined. If the manager finds a play read decently, and perceives that the scenes are to the lines nearly as sixty-five to fifteen hundred, it will most probably be an animated spectacle. If the former bears a much larger proportion to the latter, the incidents would not have their true and natural play.

* Even Mr. Mason's *golden clouds* ought, at such time to undergo a temporary dispersion, to give force to *golden sun*.

One consequence of dwelling with such an appearance of exactness upon the nature of this improvement, may, I hope, be that attention which its universal use seems to merit; for it is κτῆμα εἰς ἀεί; a lasting acquisition (as far as it goes) to all nations equally; and not more calculated to purify the drama of this country, than to invigorate that of France and Italy.

The Monthly Reviewers have taken up this subject, in their last strictures upon the Battle of Eddington, with that natural degree of prejudice, which promises to the world an accession of new light, struck out by the collision of opposite opinions. Their character of the poetical and dramatic spirit prevailing in the piece, I shall not very much at length contest; but confine myself to certain remarks, and chiefly such as may tend to elucidate my system. I have long observed, and attributed to the declension of simplicity of taste, as well as to other prejudices co-operating with it, the character which marks many decisions of modern critics on poetical compositions, and has perhaps, greatly tended to create a species of poetical style which lately received a check from the

severity of satire. The nature of this style was then too well described in poetry for me now to attempt it.* The cause, of it, however may in part be traced to a contempt of those sterling qualities of good sense, simplicity, and correctness, which, while they appear infinitely heightened in the great father of poetry, still ought to be allowed uncommon attractions in the writings of Virgil and of Terence. Praise is due to Johnson for his originality in observing, that it by no means followed, because judgment was great, that genius should necessarily be small; nor the reverse: for there seemed to have prevailed an opinion, that the two qualities, like two buckets in a well, always acted contrarywise. In like manner, thought and expression, fancy and correctness, seem supposed eternally at variance. These notions may

* The original part of the satire alluded to, is where that particular confusion of style is minutely described, which seems owing chiefly to the bad taste imbibed from books. In the rest, *doggerel*, *jargon*, *pastoral insipidity*, and other faults are satirized, which are not *injurious* to taste, though they should appear, and may consist with good but inactive judgment, as being the offspring of haste.

have influenced many criticisms I have seen; in which a faultering verse has perhaps jogged the critic out of his accustomed spleen, and delighted him at the same time with the supposed means it offered, of displaying both his benevolence and judgment, in lenity towards failing, as in itself a sufficient, and even the only, test of inborn excellence. I have, however, proceeded resolutely to correct, and aimed at propriety, in spite of these prejudices; though I think it not improbable, that deficient in merit as may be found the lyric parts of the Battle of Eddington, they may still, sometimes, owing to these causes, have been under-rated.

Judgments formed of dramatic, as well as poetical excellence, may possibly, at the present day, be sometimes marked with error. It appears to me, that in general, English critics in tragedy too much

make the whole depend upon a part.

They are properly most struck by those brilliant passages, of which, perhaps, instances are only to be found in the Greek and the English poets; and where the language of nature and of passion in a single situation, has so power-

ful an effect upon the mind. But there are qualities that, possessed in the highest degree, may confer praise beyond those which they require, in one somewhat inferior. The conduct of the fable, which Mr. Mason, in his Letters on Elfrida, speaks of as deserving greater attention, and which the French have much excelled in, must require fertility of imagination, in order to conceive a series of closely connected incidents, not only sufficiently natural to support a tragedy, but sufficiently striking to shew the skill of a master. And the end of tragedy is equally kept in view by an artful plot, as by happily imagined situations, provided the object be, in both cases, to affect, in the sense used by Bishop Hurd, or "not to affect, but to affect in the most "pleasing manner," in the sense I used it in my Fifth Letter on the Drama; meaning thereby to distinguish the overpowering sensations commonly excited by private distress, from those truly tragic ones, which are in part produced by circumstances incidental to the misfortunes of the great. It will be easily seen when the poet is verging too far to the other extreme of admiration; but this ought not rashly to be attributed to him, no more than to the painter,

who, in representing some grand historical event, should value himself as much on the relief given to the different groupes, as on the preservation of the costume, by introducing marked and striking objects peculiar to the scene; so long as he made those objects either assistant, or decidedly subordinate, to the general design. His *mathematical* attachment, too, to the strict rules derived from ancient works, may be as useful to him in *pourtraying the passions*, as it was to Raphael.

But I have conceived, in truth, that though sensible critics may have written who will never be rivalled, yet that even they had not attained a perfect knowledge of the nature of the drama; for that none of any note had deigned to consider it so far as it related to practice. All, however opposite their opinions, have praised or condemned according to their respective theories; and even represented attempts to please a whole audience, as an unworthy condescension in a poet. Yet surely there cannot be a more irrational supposition, than that any work of man *ought* to be ill-calculated for the purposes for which it was designed. A conviction of this, discovered to me in a tragedy, a

greater task than it has been commonly supposed; and in attempting to do that part which had not been before undertaken, it is not wonderful that I should have somewhat neglected that which had. I had besides, another reason for giving a *common* air to the language and flow of the verse; and while I was in effect taking great pains with the plot, I conceived it would be generally attractive, to drop, in the usual careless manner, upon sentiments, and recall to mind compositions the least *incumbered* with thought. Still, however, I hoped that my tragedy would be considered, by judges, like a statue purposely deficient in the half tints, and even still bearing the marks of the chizel, only that it might attain its effect at a distance, where the populace could contemplate it. Nor have I had much more reason to complain, than that it could not be judged of with the advantages that were expected to recommend it. I, in another place, took notice of the prejudices of the winter managers. As I thought, with the Italian critic above quoted, that it was "impos-" sible to compose a tragedy by guess, without ex-" periment," to write and bring mine upon the stage, were one and the same thing; yet, in spite of this,

and though I esteem, in truth, the experiment made (for the public good) at the Haymarket, a memorable one, as opening the door at once to chastity of dramatic composition, yet ridicule was cast upon the expence it put me to, no doubt as so much more ruinous, and less sagaciously incurred, than what arises from electioneering, or games of hazard. I had little encouragement from those who, having made up their mind upon the subject, had formed determinate ideas of the drama from an imperfect consideration of its nature, and whose literary turn confirmed their favourite prejudices. Even those whose extensive knowledge and sound judgment had enabled them to consult and understand the best models, ancient and modern, may, from having formed rather a systematic notion of dramatic style and manner, have revolted at the novelty of the work, as a whole. But I recollect a difference of opinion in these judges, when they saw it, as they would a statue, raised to a niche, though not sufficiently distant. When the play was performed, and they had not to contemplate the language, as it appeared in print, but had their attention drawn off by objects presented to the eyes, (which ought to be

principal in a tragedy), they felt and acknowledged the effect of that *body of incident*, which was for the first time sufficient to support one; and which at once avoided the confusion, and produced the variety of the irregular drama. They perceived then, that it was not those faint gleams of dramatic talent, that the Monthly Reviewers are most indulgent to, that were the most valuable part of the piece; but that the plot was its principal merit; in which there was to be found, in many respects, an unequalled portion of the labour of art. Besides instances which may be collected from what I have said elsewhere, I will mention one in the use made of the odes to carry on the plot, whereas the ancients were content with advising that they should not be unconnected with the main story. Those parts too, which were intended to produce an effect, by means of more dramatic situations, are of equal use in carrying on the plot.

But on the other hand, among the judges originally favourable, I have thought I had many who were amply enlightened by nature; and in the first place, gentlemen of education and strength of mind, who having, since their youth, devoted little

time to the cultivation of literature, had acquired no literary prejudices, and taking up the book, or attending the performance, perhaps as a relaxation from business, were, on many accounts, prepared to penetrate into the texture of the fable, and estimate its component parts. Secondly, I have been particularly favoured by the gallery, and that, as I have proved, independent of stage effect, and by the genuine, unimpeachable method of rejecting verbosity; concerning the merit of originality in which mode, let those speak, who judgefrom other principles than the *gout de comparaison*. I do not know how far fashionable singularity in dramatic matters may be carried, or whether it is no longer allowed proper, to conclude a tragedy with a grand spectacle enforcing the character of the catastrophe, as in the Rodogune of Corneille; but I am persuaded something of this is done in the last scene of the Battle of Eddington, where, after every political topic has been glanced at during the play, which awakens the enthusiasm of all persons who think they love the constitution, Alfred is exhibited to the English people, as having just gained the decisive victory over the Danes, to which they

are indebted for that constitution; as leading his family out of a hovel, in order to inhabit a palace; and as pointing out to his followers the happy change in the situation of all orders, as well as solemnly assuring them of his intention of engaging in his grand work. His numerous auditors, consisting of English, Scotch, Welch, and Irish, each well distinguished by a national dress, might produce an interesting and characteristic, if not a picturesque and striking effect.

In their criticism on the Letters on the Drama, the Monthly Reviewers represent them as liable to the imputation of "talking about it and about it;" though, to be sure, so new and comprehensive a system, explained in much less than a hundred pages, can scarcely answer to such a description. They honour me likewise, by comparing small things with great, in remarking faults which the Letters had, in common with the Greek critics. If they allude to the treatise which is most in point, the poetics of Aristotle, I cannot but think what has been considered as a mere summary, and little more than the heads of a critical work, must, with equal impropriety, be said to "talk about it and

"about it." A person who thought otherwise, might naturally set about the abridgment of an index. As to concatenation of ideas and precision, they are real, and as evident as the copiousness of the subject would permit. The order, which is the result of reflection, is exactly such as I should still prefer, to explain my general opinions to the reader; nor do I know any position, or sentence, which an union of knowledge, and the attention necessary to understand it, would not prove to have a very determinate meaning.

The doctrine of dramatic deception, though, I believe, rejected by the greatest part of writers, is more natural to conceive, than the recipe to make a poet by making a convert to it, on account of the *manifest* tendency of a belief in it to increase the powers of fancy in dramatic composition. But this seems suitable to the prevailing idea of the small value of common sense and right reason in poetry. Yet, though the observation is true, that an enlightened age sets a greater value upon the finer strokes of imagination, than an adherence to the rules of composition, it does not upon a departure from those rules, simply considered; nor should

it be to flatter the vanity of the poet, but to please ourselves, that we read his work. The literary epicure, who sits down to one of the feasts of reason, may be disposed to admire the skill of the cook; but he will curse him for a coxcomb, if he finds it owing to his self-sufficiency that he is ill and uncomfortably served.

I am not at all staggered by the adherence of the Monthly Reviewers to their opinion of tragi-comedy, either as to what respects plot, or temper of mind. Duplicity of plot in the drama, may be compared to *duplicity of gesture*, in public speaking, such as it appeared in the Roman orator Curio, who waved his body from one side to the other; or as it has appeared in some modern orator, when he could not speak without pulling about his hat; in which cases, an affected motion of the limbs or body has been superadded to the natural one. They are both ungraceful and inelegant, and yet both useful to those who resort to them; for one is assistant in the production of incidents, as the other is in the production of arguments; and I have shewn quantity of incident to be as essential in tragedy, as quantity of argument can be in ora-

tory. Both ought equally to be condemned in themselves; and yet we should regret them if we were to lose, at the same time, the fruit of those talents they have been effectual in calling forth. In like manner, dramas composed both of tragic and comic scenes, are only to be defended by the degree of genius which they possess. If any one has at the beginning assumed a tragic tone, and a comic part succeeds, if that ceases before the conclusion of it, the *tragicum spirans* is quite forgotten in the poet, and we are employed too much in recollecting him, to be completely interested afterwards. Sufficient reasons have been given to recommend dramatic simplicity; but what is equal to innumerable *reasons*, is this *fact*, that a method is at length pointed out, for their obtaining general favour; by the help of which, if bad taste has formerly prevailed in criticism, good taste, no doubt, in future, will; nor do I think the managers will be long able to reject a form of play against which they are prejudiced, upon the old plea of its unfitness for stage representation.

I have said nothing above upon the rational introduction of music, on which I dwelt in the criti-

cal works I have already published; because it is not so likely, as the due construction of a simple drama, to attract general attention when the experiment is made. Neither did the notion I had conceived of it cost any, and still less equal, time and labour; for the first idea of it occurred to me many years before I made the drama my particular study, and when, after lectures on the Greek tragedians at the university, I was accustomed to attend the opera during the vacations. My subsequent reading and observation have only confirmed me in the opinions I then imperfectly formed.

It cannot be said I have cajoled any critic or person into an agreement with me in these different opinions; since I have taken every fair means, by refraining from such conduct, of provoking objection, and piquing prejudice, in order to subject my system to the severest trial. The same desire of making a curious experiment by its publicity, and no wish of becoming my own panegyrist, may appear to have occasioned the claims I lay of any share of that merit, in the Battle of Eddington, which the Monthly Reviewers disallow, as well as a few additional remarks now in explanation of it.

That they would *rescind* their unfavourable character of the poetry, I never could presume to think; for though I should differ from them at all on that point, I have rested all claims on demonstration; but they must rescind their character of the play as a *heavy* play (according to the usual acceptation of the term), because it is altered in a second edition, so as to become one no longer; and they, and many other critics, may see reason for allowing that it has put an end to one objection against the regular drama, namely, the want of variety usually experienced by an audience in its representation. If it should be possible that this play, though justice were done in the acting, and management of it, would ever displease a numerous one, consisting of people of all ranks; yet the principles upon which it is formed, are a new discovered spell, to secure others who are but a little more expert than myself in the use of it. It must be considered, that I have endeavoured, not so much at composing *a tragedy*, as at perfecting the form, and pointing out the nature, of *tragedy*. But the piece in which I have done this, will at length, and would now, I have the greatest reason to think, be allowed that portion of

value which utility confers, were utility in this instance, known as clearly as it is in general sought ardently. The prejudice which prevents its appearance at the winter theatres, forbids likewise, the pleasure an audience would take in listening to sentiments, in which almost all the topics interesting to them as Englishmen, are, by a good deal of fair labour, brought together; and in witnessing the representation on the stage, of an event in our history, naturally heightened, which gives beyond all others to the natives of these islands, reasons for just exultation.

If any resemblance is, on these accounts, remarked in it, to those dramas which rely on the snares they lay for applause, I ask how the comparison will hold good, when it is seen to adhere more invariably to the rules, whether allowed real or imaginary, of rational composition, than any former tragedy? It is true, that the same means are resorted to, though divested of what made them blameable, of attracting attention; and owing too to that circumstance, the success of this new mode could not much more discredit them, but only institute a fair competition, in preventing

their almost total monopoly of the stage. However, carefully, in a work of this sort, to guard against any splendour in the spectacle, or any aptness of allusion in the dialogue, which naturally offers itself, is no more praiseworthy, than to aim at the effect of introducing actors, with only part of their cloathes on. Nature in this, as in other respects, is the proper guide. All that I regret, in following example, is, that I adopted too much in some places, that usual carelessness of style, approaching to baldness, and in attending to dramatic, too much overlooked poetical effect; for I am now convinced, *action* would have attained every end I could desire. It is by this, that the scenes are not only made to carry on the plot, but possess a separate consequence, just as much as change of scene from Europe to Asia and back again, could ever give. For I in vain search with the Monthly Reviewers in the Gothic drama for those gigantic efforts, and that grandeur of energy which they perceive; and it seems to me like searching for a needle in hay. Were only the most interesting point of time in all the situations it presents to employ the poet, an evident advantage must accrue; for there may be those who mistake smoke for fire. The

true English Gothic, in the drama, as in architecture, is to be looked for only in England, where it is confined to the plays of Shakespeare, being only made delightful by his genius, while indeed it does little honour to his judgment. In the German play of the *Robbers*, the characters are drawn with spirit; but this merit is fully discovered towards the beginning, before its frequent changes of scene, and plainly existed independent of them. The Monthly Reviewers themselves, observe in the play of *Fiesco*, that "the interest is not always on the encrease," (which does not do particular honour to this species of drama,) and the Robbers seems as little to defy criticism, for the nature, the delicacy, and the terror unmixed with horror, of its situations. Among other instances of its finding no advantage in the liberty it is allowed, may be mentioned, the interest not increasing sufficiently towards the end. This has always struck me as very natural, and proved so, not only by the falling off of many modern plays towards the conclusion, when a poet becomes tired of the work he has in hand, but by the remark even of the oldest critic*, who thereby shews nature to have been the same

* πολλοι δε πλεξαντες ευ, λυουσι κακως. ARIST.

in all countries, and in all ages. Though, however, these circumstances but little recommend the Gothic drama, I would rather have the critic, in general, lay much stress upon them, than the poet, who ought to be allowed every liberty he thinks necessary, provided only his compositions possess merit.

I think, after the above observations, the question will appear reduced within a narrow compass, and *some degree* of value may attach to the Battle of Eddington, on one of two accounts; for,

Either it had more poetry to support it in a successful representation, than the Monthly Reviewers allow:

Or, not having more, it deserved praise for judgment in the construction of its plot, (which could thus alone procure it success contrary to the universal opinion,) EXACTLY IN THE SAME PROPORTION AS THE POETRY WAS DEFECTIVE.

A

TRANSLATION

OF

RANIERI DI CALSABIGI'S

LETTER

TO COUNT ALFIERI, ON

TRAGEDY.

WITH NOTES.

THE NOTES

By J. PENN, Esq.

LONDON:

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1797.

ON TRAGEDY.

I DO not know, my dear Count, whether I ought rather to congratulate you, or Italy in general, upon the four excellent tragedies which you have lately printed; wherein you afford us the expectation of seeing some other pieces published, as you declare in the first volume with which you have favoured me.

You have composed a rich treasure for us Italians, who have hitherto been so miserably poor in tragedy, as well as for the English, who are equally deficient with ourselves; with the exception, not of any entire plays, which are as bad as our own, but of some sublime passages of the illustrious Shakspeare. You will also be of use to the French themselves, who, since they have lost Crebillon and Voltaire, have sunk to a very low state, without any immediate probability of rising from it.

If I may presume to make the assertion, my honoured friend,

> Dixisti insigne, recens et adhuc
> Indictum ore alio.
>
> ——— New-born glories
> Wake *thy* soul, inspire *thy* tongue.
>
> BOSCAWEN.

How many writers will henceforth apply to you for new and theatrical situations; for characters drawn from the life, with a bold and masterly pencil; and for vigorous, energetic, and laconic expressions. How many of your single thoughts will be wiredrawn into entire periods, and even entire scenes. You teach us,

> Magnumque loqui, nitique cothurno;
>
> The buskin'd actor with *his* spirit fraught,
> To breathe with dignity the lofty thought.
>
> COLMAN.

You strip our Tragic Muse of the rags in which she has been hitherto shamefully clothed. You console us for the wretched state of our theatre; and you put us in possession of that rich and elegant dress, clothe

in which we may shew ourselves not inferior to that nation, which hitherto has justly looked upon us with an eye of compassion, and deserved contempt.

If any one, my dear friend, will patiently attempt to read those few Italian tragedies, which having been separated from the immense number of their deformed sisters, are printed with the haughty title of *select*, and are proposed as models for imitation; if, I say, he makes an effort to peruse them from beginning to end, what will he find? Deformed, complicated, perplexed, and improbable plans; and an erroneous disposition of the parts; useless persons; want of unity in the action, ill drawn characters, gigantic or puerile conceits, languid verses, captious expressions, unharmonious and unnatural poetry; and the whole piece filled with descriptions, comparisons out of their proper place, little rants of philosophy or politics, interwoven with disagreeable amours, effeminate conversations, and vulgar displays of tenderness, which meet us in every scene. There is no appearance of tragic vigour, of the opposition of rival passions, or of the astonishing revolutions of the theatre: in vain do we seek that which

Pectus inaniter angit,
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet,

Can make me feel each passion ———
Enrage, compose, with more than magic art;
With pity and with terror tear my heart. POPE.

We find nothing which interests us, instructs, amuses, or charms us

Delectando, pariterque monendo.

Instruction and delight can blend,
Please with his fancy, with his moral mend.
COLMAN.

Every thing is reduced to a concatenation of bad verses, in which

Acer spiritus ac vis,
Nec verbis, nec rebus inest.

——— it may be wrought
In style and subject, without fire and force. FRANCIS

In this manner, my dear Count, I have described, perhaps with a little too much severity but certainly with truth, that which has been hitherto called Tragedy among us. The greatest boast that can be made is, that it is composed, ac

cording to the rules which Aristotle has laid down, for Trissino having set the example in his Sofonisba, nobody has hitherto presumed to depart from it.

But why, it will be said, have we confined ourselves within these limits, which are so far removed from the perfection of the drama? why has no Italian author produced a tragedy which may be compared with the pieces of the Greek, or at least of the French stage, since in every other branch we have poets without number, or at least such as are called so? why, as if despairing of recovery, have we returned back to those musical dramas, which having become ridiculous in the last century, have since been made more tolerable by Apostolo Zeno, and afterwards perfected by Metastasio; leaving the buskin and laurel of tragedy to our neighbours, without making farther attempts to dispute it with them? I will answer these questions separately, as I flatter myself that I have discovered the true solution.

Since the Sofonisba of Trissino abovementioned, which was acted at Rome; and since some other tragedies (our first attempts in the art) represented at Florence and Ferrara; we have, indeed, never

wanted poets, who have continued to write new pieces, and have succeeded in producing them upon the stage. But what kind of stages were these? sometimes theatres belonging to the court, but most commonly to private noblemen, who caused them to be erected in their palaces and villas. Upon these temporary stages, select tragedies were represented a few times by the courtiers of the prince, or by private parties of ladies and gentlemen. Thus Italy having never had a permanent tragic theatre, nor actors by profession, these private representations could only be called transient attempts, from which the art received little or no advantage.

It was worse when those companies of actors, who have always reigned upon the Italian stage, got possession of those more or less imperfect tragedies, when they were made public by the press. Every body knows of what absurd and aukward buffoons those wandering troops are generally composed. Every body knows that the greater part of these barbarous actors, besides being taken from the lowest and most uneducated part of the people, is born in those provinces where our lan-

guage is spoken with the least purity, both in the grammar, and in the pronounciation. Therefore, these actors, lisping a tragedy, produce the same effect upon their hearers, as the tragedies of Racine or Voltaire would produce at Paris, if they were recited in the provincial brogue of Gascony or Picardy. We all know to what ridiculous, ill-dressed, aukward, and even ugly females, the sublime parts of the Phedra, Andromache, Semiramis, and Zara, are given, to be torn to pieces in the argon of Bologna, Lombardy, or Genoa; and to e recited and acted without elegance or grace, in e style of the beggar-women in the streets.

Thus the entire want of a permanent and well onducted theatre, and the more important defiency of proper actors, hindered our poets from pplying themselves to the composition of real agedy; and prevented the studious and judicious rt of the public from frequenting the theatre, d all of us from placing importance in it, and aking it an object of national glory.

Moreover, Italy being divided into so many all states, never has had a great and central oint of union for Italian ambition. The Romans,

the Lombards, the Tuscans, the Piedmontese, the Venetians, and the Neapolitans, considered each other as having different interests, and as enemies, or at least rivals, both in the sciences and in the fine arts. In the art of painting, they certainly were so; the different schools opposed and attacked each other: the Roman painters endeavoured to decry the Bolognese, these the Florentines, and the Florentines the Venetians and the Neapolitans. Each made a separate sect, to the great injury of the nation in general.

The same happened in poetry. The absurd critic ms of that foolish set of writers upon the divine poem of Tasso, are a proof of this assertion. The books which were written by those coxcombs against that immortal poem, would fill a large shelf. Ranged under the banners of Signor Lionardo (instead of Leonardo, as more elegant) Salviati they endeavoured to demonstrate that the Gerusalemme Liberata was a collection of nonsense. Th too irritable author, already rendered melancholy by an unhappy passion, was driven to madness b their attacks. They seduced the wretched prater who were envious of the sublime genius of Tasso

they had a short existence, like troublesome insects; after which they sunk into the oblivion which they deserved.

From this pedantic generation arose the ridiculous comparisons between the Orlando Furioso; and the Gerusalemme; ridiculous, because they compared the Iliad with the Arabian Tales, and the Eneid with the Romances of Chivalry. Thence arose the puerile predilection for the Petrarchian style of speaking and writing; and the senseless attempts at judging the mature language of the sixteenth century by the grammar of the fourteenth, which had hardly quitted its cradle.

The Italians being separated, as I mentioned, both by interest and by rivalship in the sciences and fine arts; and each part, separately taken, not being sufficiently powerful to establish and keep up, during the whole course of the year, a national tragic theatre; they continued indeed to write tragedies from time to time, but always on the model of the first: they likewise printed them, but they were not able to bring them before the public on the stage, a most essential trial of theatrical effect. And is it, indeed, possible to compose a tragedy by

guess, without actual experiment? The poet, left in uncertainty, finds himself in the same doubtful situation in which a painter or sculptor would be, who undertook to paint a picture, or to carve out a group, without knowing whether it was to be placed in a gallery or a public square, upon the front of a triumphal arch, or of a church. Thus wanting the knowledge of what can make an impression on the mind of the spectator, and either interest him or rouse him, the poet may probably compose a piece according to the rules prescribed, and in an elegant style, but it will be without force, languid, cold, tiresome, and rugged.

Neither can this indispensable practice in tragedy be acquired without frequenting the theatre and meditating on it, with a previous provision of all other kinds of knowledge necessary in the dramatic art. This experience being wanting, (which is difficult to obtain, unless, together with the knowledge of foreign languages, the theatres of other nations, which are best provided with actors, are diligently and attentively surveyed) no person can make any great progress in this most noble branch of poetry. Those geniuses who, as it were

by inspiration, start up ready formed, are very rare: and even these do not bring their art to perfection at one stroke, but only point out the way to others. Corneille, who derived assistance from Mairet, Rotrou, and other imperfect writers, formed Racine; and these two formed Voltaire and Crebillon. Thus among the Greeks, Sophocles learnt from Eschylus, and Euripides from Sophocles, with the assistance of a permanent theatre. A poet who is ignorant of the practice of theatrical effect, cannot be striking in his tragedies, except in a few scenes derived from his own warmth and enthusiam; or in the display of the tender passion, which insinuates itself into the mind, and agitates and rouses it with greater facility.

It is incontestable therefore, in my opinion, that a fixed theatre principally forms both writers and actors, and that both writers and actors acquire perfection by change and variety. If therefore an Italian sovereign should desire to introduce into his dominions, an useful and pleasing species of drama, it would be necessary to begin by establishing a permanent stage. Then he ought to collect a number of the best actors which could be

found, selecting out of the itinerant troops those few who pronounce well, who have a handsome and genteel person, a good voice, or any other perfection natural or acquired. It would be necessary above all, to collect those females in which these talents are found together, and to deliver them from the infamy to which, I know not why, all those who appear on the stage are condemned by us, without any difference on account of their conduct and manners. A company thus selected being well paid, and a judicious collection of tragedies and comedies being formed, either out of our own stock, or translated with vigour and elegance, with a proper distribution of parts, they ought to appear on the stage every day, as soon as they are properly instructed by able teachers, in judicious declamation, action, and theatrical gesture. Young poets, by frequenting this well regulated theatre, would insensibly acquire knowledge with regard to the management of the passions, the disposition of the scenes and subjects, and whatever else could contribute to the production of excellent tragedies; they would not run after the effusions of an unregulated imagination; they would

acquire the true and natural language of the theatre; and by little and little they would arrive at that degree of perfection, which at present is hardly known in Italy. Our poets, ill provided with every thing, and particularly with that most essential mirror, a permanent theatre, in which may be seen

Quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non.

——— the beautiful and base
Of vice and virtue more instructive rules; FRANCIS.

nevertheless, to our great disgrace, attempt to write tragedy. They think that they observe the rules laid down, they do all that is necessary. Not considering that they are pigmies, who madly strive to wield the club of Hercules. They do not reflect, that

Non satis est dixisse, ego mira poëmata pango.

——— 'tis *not* enough to cry,
I can write poems to strike wonder blind. COLMAN.

they do not call to mind how difficult a task it is to wrestle with Sophocles, with Euripides, and three or four others, who fill up the immense void of twenty-four centuries. They forget that all the

tragedies which have been hissed, ridiculed, and despised, for this century past, have nevertheless been written according to the rules: as if it were sufficient to observe the unities, to arrive at perfection: as if the knowledge of men, of their characters and their manners, in all ages, in all kinds of education, under all governments, in all countries, at all times of life, and in all different religions, were of little or no importance: as if the difficult art of forming a proper plan, of dividing it well, of distributing it into scenes, and of restraining it, so that the interest may increase instead of diminishing, were of no use: and lastly, as if there were no occasion for being endued with a poetical imagination, which is the principal cause of the value of every species of poetry, with an easy vein, with elegance of diction, with force and vehemence of thought, with elegance and freedom of colouring, and with what Horace summarily calls

——— Mens divinior, atque os
Magna sonaturum.

A mind partaking of divinity, and lips from whence sublime sounds issue.

So many different talents, that nature and art appear to force themselves, when they join to produce them.

This is the reason, my dear friend, that having no permanent tragic theatre, whilst in many cities there was a musical stage almost constantly, we have returned to this last, forming dramatic monsters, for such are our musical plays, or at least those of the greater part of theatrical poets. Apostolo Zeno, to improve the plan, abandoned the ridiculous subjects of the last age, and endeavoured to form the opera upon the model of the French tragedies. Thus we behold a prolixity, sufficiently insupportable when declaimed, and much more so when sung in recitative. We have introduced tedious narratives, complicated intricacies, actions void of simplicity, tiresome displays of science, and other frivolities, all erected after the same design. We have added of our own, the Gothic invention of similes, noisy uproars, everlasting debates on morality, war, politics, and government, which agree with the theatre just as well as a Harlequin's coat with the divine statue of the Vatican Apollo. I am well aware, that this plan has not

been adopted without a motive. With such materials for filling up, it is very easy to get forward. All the characters have always a great deal to say, for even the confidantes and captains of the guard, are represented as crossed in love. And if any scenes are still deficient in matter, we have a great store of philosophical remarks and comparisons with which we can fill up the vacancy.

But on the other hand, if we regard the rule of *simplex et unum*;* if we confine ourselves to the number of persons which the action requires, without augmentation; if these only speak according to their characters and their passions; in this case, to furnish three or five interesting acts completely, with the language of the heart, and not of the fancy, is a task which

——————Pauci, quos æquus amavit
Jupiter, atque ardens evexit ad æthera virtus,
Dîs geniti, potuere.

To few great Jupiter imparts ——————
And those of shining worth and heavenly race.

DRYDEN.

* Simple and one.

In the musical drama, every thing passes off without difficulty; the poetry is the part of it which is the least regarded; nobody either reads it, or listens to it; and with justice. The audience wait for the airs, and in the mean time converse, scold, chat, and make love, with so little moderation, that in our theatres the observation of Horace, respecting those of his own age, is perfectly verified;

——— Quæ pervincere voces
Evaluere sonum, referunt quem nostra theatra?
Garganum mugire putes nemus.

—Where's the voice so strong, as to confound
The shouts with which our theatres resound?
Loud as when surges lash the Tuscan shore,
Or mountain forests with a tempest roar. FRANCIS.

Such being our respectable custom, modern poets may flatter themselves with the expectation of obtaining a name, of no very great duration, and in other countries, attended rather with censure than with praise; they may vaunt of their performances, and give congratulation and applause to each other; and, proceeding in the same track, where little genius, and less labour, is required, they may obtain

the praises and predilections of the fair sex, in every situation of life.

According to the observation of Horace, my dear Count,

> Iliacos intra muros peccatur, et extra;
>
> Trojans and Greeks———
> Offend alike.——— FRANCIS.

So that if I turn my eyes from our wretched theatre towards the English stage, I shall not find much greater subjects for commendation in any department. That illustrious nation, which affects to think and act differently from the rest of the world, a nation of liberty and lofty spirit, has extended its desire of singularity to the theatre. It has adopted a peculiar constitution of its drama, as well as of its government; it is contented with, and even vain of it, in spite of the clamours of other nations. According to the famous Shakspeare, the author of this new constitution, the unities are chains fit only for slaves, and probability is the invention of a dull imagination. He either knew not, or did not wish to know, the treatises and tragedies of the Greeks, as our Metastasio asserted that he had never read

the French poets, in order to avoid imitation. Shakspeare, therefore, soared without any foreign assistance. He produced monsters, but they were original monsters; he introduced characters without number. With battles, with the poison of assassins and tyrants, with death and murder, he mixed the buffoonery of pretended fools, who frequently really were such. In his plays we are often made to laugh in the next scene after a dreadful massacre. He did not endeavour to embellish nature; he shewed her such as she really was when he lived, rough, fierce, and savage. But to say the truth, the characters of his pieces were savages, and so perhaps were those who formed his audience. He made great use of spectres and ghosts, and in my opinion with great judgment. They are (whatever people say) by far the most effectual instruments of terror, and were very well adapted to the superstitious and credulous minds of his countrymen. It is likewise possible that a simple violent death had no great effect on the minds of men of that disposition: Shakspeare therefore multiplied murders to a disgusting length. He endued his assassins with sanguinary rage, brutality, and scornful

cruelty. And if these horrors were not sufficient to interest his audience, he applied to hell for new powers to move their obdurate souls. He mixed prose and verse, the sublime and the ridiculous, with such success, that his buffoonery is exactly that of the lowest populace, while his sublimity is in the style of Longinus. His successors, the flowery, elegant, and poetical Dryden, the tender Rowe, (tender, as far as the character of his nation allows) the warm but incoherent Otway, the political and thoughtful Addison, cold, except in the soliloquy of Cato,

Deliberatâ morte ferocior;

Fearless by reflection grown,
——greatly thus to end—— BOSCAWEN

all attempted to imitate their master. They seldo succeeded, especially in his peculiar walk of t grand, the sublime, the picturesque, because did not possess his genius: so that old Shakspea the English Eschylus, remained master of the sta and still continues to domineer there, and to m the hair of the audience erect with terror, e though they are aware and acquainted with w

they hear: for when this singular poet designs to terrify, by his forcible, strong, and energetic expressions, he destroys every precaution, and overcomes all resistance. England did not advance beyond this father of her tragedy: the British Eschylus was not followed by a Sophocles or an Euripides. The Tragic Muse, at the death of Shakspeare, appears to have exclaimed,

Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,
O English stage.

The French theatre, which I now am about to examine, is undoubtedly the best which exists. But must be acknowledged, that its faults are by no eans few. It has too much narrative and decla- ation, and too little business and action: the cha- cters who appear upon it, are modelled after the ench fashion, and all pretty nearly resemble each er: they think and speak *à la mode de France*, d make love like the shepherds in Fontenelle. eek, Roman, Scythian, and Asiatic passions are dom met with, although heroes of those nations represented on the stage.

The sublime sentiments of those free souls, those uous constitutions of antiquity, are seldom seen:

every thing is of the present age. The French theatre is confined within the bounds of imaginary decorum. The style of the conversations is almost always elegant; but also generally consists of amorous disputes, arranged in syllogistic order. The heroic epistles of Ovid, and the elegies of every love-sick poet are adopted, and dressed up in their own manner. As a proof, I will take the first tragedy which occurs on opening the book, the Andromaque, one of the finest of the immortal Racine's. The scene which lies before me, is the fourth of the first act, between Pyrrhus and Andromache; a scene of a hundred and thirty verses in length, which entirely consists of a long formal dispute, in which it is debated, whether the widow of Hector, may or ought to marry the son of Achilles; of that Achilles who slew her husband, and dragged him behind his chariot, round the walls of Troy. The same Pyrrhus of whom Virgil says,

——— Primoque in limine Pyrrhus
Exultat telis, et luce coruscat ahenâ.

Before the gate stood Pyrrhus, threat'ning loud
With glittering arms, conspicuous in the crowd.

DRYDEN.

The poet compares him to a serpent,

——— mala gramina pastus;

Restored with poisonous herbs; DRYDEN.

then to a river, which having broken its banks,

Cum stabulis armenta trahit;

Sweeps the cattle and the cots away. DRYDEN.

And when he makes him speak, he makes him say, in an insulting tone, to the respectable old Priam, while he is murdering him;

——— Referes ergo hæc, et nuncius ibis
Pelidæ genitori:———

—To my father my foul deeds relate; DRYDEN.

nd in the act of killing a defenceless old man:

Nunc morere .... altaria, ad ipsa trementem
Traxit.
Implicuitque comam lævâ;
Ac lateri capulo tenus abdidit ensem.

Now die ——
Hauled from beneath the violated shade,
And on the sacred pile the royal victim laid

His right hand held his bloody falchion bare;
His left he twisted in his hoary hair,
Then, with a speeding thrust, his heart he found.

DRYDEN.

(remark this frantic excess, *abdidit ensem*).—— Let us now see with what Parisian gallantry, this Pyrrhus, who is drawn in this manner by the first poet in the world, is made by Racine to address the weeping Andromache:

—— Me cherchiez vous, Madame?
Un espoir si charmant me seroit il permis?

May I, madam,
Flatter my hopes so far as to believe,
You come to seek me here? PHILIPS.

He goes on, and says:

Peut on haïr sans cesse, et punit-on toujours?
Que vos beaux yeux sur moi se sont bien exercés!
Brulè de plus de feux que je n'en allumai, ...
Tant de foi, tant de pleurs, tant d'ardeurs inquietes.

And does one always hate, and always punish?
Oh! how are those bright eyes revenged on me!
More fired by love, than Troy was by my rage—
Such constancy, such ceaseless tears, such ardour.

I will desist from transcribing any more verses

s I think these are abundantly sufficient to prove what I have asserted. Certainly these tender peeches, these amorous addresses, these little conceits, do not agree with the character of Pyrrhus.*

* In Mithridate, that king, complaining of the passion which he feels for Monimia, whom he suspects to be namoured of his favourite son Zifares, laments in the ollowing manner:

J'ai su, par une longue et pénible industrie,
Des plus mortels vénins prévenir la furie:
Ah! qu'il eût mieux valu, plus sage ou plus heureux,
Et repoussant les traits d'un amour dangereux,
Ne pas laisser remplir d'ardeurs empoisonnées
Un cœur déja glacé par le froid des années!

These verses are quoted by Voltaire with national complacency, and are given out as worthy to serve for a model. He ought, however, to have told us what those poisonous ardours are; perhaps those of the robe which Dejanira gave to Hercules, or Medea to Creusa. He ought to have justified the conceit which is so very observable in the last two verses, in which the poet trifles with a play of words, about those poisonous ardours, and heart frozen by the cold of years. In my opinion, such a coldness is degrading. Add this to that verse of Pyrrhus, which he has quoted out of Andromaque:

More fired by love, than Troy was by my rage;

To shew that we are not unjust in fixing upon a single example, let us consider how that monster

and some other passages which I could find in Racine; and it will appear, that the French ought to have abstained from imputing with so great contempt the defect of *concetti* to our Tasso, and from giving the name of *clinquant* to his immortal poem, in the words of Boileau, who was no painter-poet. I do not believe that two viler conceits than these, can be found in the Gerusalemme Liberata. If the French had had this moderation (as, to say the truth, the sublime Voltaire frequently had), they would not have deserved Horace's reproach:

Cum tua pervideas oculis male lippus inunctis,
Cur in amicorum vitiis tam cernis acutum?

—— Wherefore while you carelessly pass by
Your own worst vices with unheeding eye,
Why so sharp-sighted in another's fame,
Strong as an eagle's ken or dragon's beam? FRANC.

These little defects do not take away my high admiration of the great Racine; but when one quotes verses out of a poet, it ought to be done with circumspection, for fear of exposing oneself to reprehension. I will here quote some verses of Racine, which surpass every thing that is most poetical, most picturesque, and most animated in

ero speaks in Britannicus; and we shall receive n additional proof, of what I have undertaken to

ny tragic poet, ancient or modern. Such are those hich Clytemnestra pronounces, at the moment when he believes her daughter to be sacrificed: Scene IV. Act. V. of Iphigene:

Quoi! pour noyer les Grecs et leurs mille vaisseaux,
Mer, tu n'ouvriras pas des abîmes nouveaux?
Quoi! lorsque les chassant du port qui les recele,
L'Aulide aura vomi leur flotte criminelle,
Les vents, les mêmes vent, si long temps accusés,
Ne te couvriront pas de ses vaisseaux brisés?
Et toi, Soleil, et toi, qui dans cette contrée
Reconnois l'héritier et le vrai fils d'Atrée,
Toi qui n'osas du pere éclairer le festin,
Recule, ils t'ont appris ce funeste chemin!
Mais cependant, ô ciel! ô mere infortunée!
De festons odieux ma fille couronnée
Tend la gorge aux couteaux par son pere apprêtés!
Calchas va dans son sang .... Barbares, arrêtez!
C'est le pur sang du Dieu qui lance le tonnere....
J'entends gronder la foudre, et sens trembler la terre;
Un Dieu vengeur, un Dieu fait retentir ses coups.

O divine enthusiasm! O model of eloquence, inimi- ble in any age or nation! I am impartial, but the rench writers ought to render equal justice to us.

demonstrate. Thanks to Tacitus and Suetonius, Nero is as well known in our days, as he was in Rome, during his abominable reign. In Britannicus we find him chatting, through an hundred and sixty verses, with that imaginary Junia, who is introduced to please the ladies of the court. The obstinate Mithridates

Adversis rerum immersabilis undis,

In perils plunged, the patient hero——

FRANCIS.

converses in the same style of gallantry with the unhappy Monimia. The Turk Bajazet talks in the same tender language to Attalide: and so does the half tamed Hippolytus, the enemy of love, to the fabulous Aricia, and the amorous Titus to his faithful Berenice. No person who has read these tragedies will accuse me of malignity in asserting, that all the heroes of the French stage are formed upon the same model.

Those of Corneille, indeed, are less tender and less whining: his genius was of a loftier kind. He was too full of lofty conceptions to descend to those amorous follies: and when he does so, he represents

Polyphemus toying with Galatea. But it must be observed, that all his characters resemble each other in their gigantic rudeness. Corneille almost always goes beyond nature; his figures are always massy and excessive. He often makes use of the sententious vigour of Lucan, and the rhetorical language of Seneca, and frequently, in his endeavour to imitate them

——— Nubes et inania captat.

——— will despise
The words of earth, and soar into the skies. FRANC.

And when he strives to adorn his heroes with the passion of love, as he describes it without feeling it, he soon discovers his deficiency.

Crebillon, his admirer and disciple, is always gloomy, and indeed too much so; and his style is defective and inelegant. Voltaire neglects his subjects, by which means he frequently runs into improbability. Of this assertion his Semiramis is a sufficient proof: upon the too improbable plot of which, a judicious and unanswerable critique was lately published in London. Neither has he com-

pletely avoided the defect of declamation, nor that of dressing his characters in the French style. I will not enlarge upon the evidence of this, least I should be tedious. But in spite of whatever weak and defective passages may be discerned by the eye of criticism in the tragedies of these four sublime poets; they are nevertheless the best in the world. They equalled the ancient Greeks in many things, in some they surpassed them. If they had imitated nature more closely, if they had yielded less to the frivolous taste of the times in which they lived, (when the true and majestic ideas of antiquity were scorned and abhorred) they would have fixed the *ne plus ultra* of tragedy for future poets. But perfection is above the reach of man: that which has fewest faults in every science and fine art, is the best.

——— Optimus ille est,
Qui minimis urgetur.

——————— the best
Is he, who with the fewest is oppress'd. FRANCIS.

Such are these illustrious tragic poets of France. When I reflect upon the celebrated observation of Horace,

Ut pictura poesis.

Poems and pictures are adjudged alike; COLMAN.

I am induced to believe that it is more significant and mysterious than is commonly imagined. It appears to me, like an oracle, to contain hidden meanings, the interpretation of which requires much attentive meditation. Suffer me, my dear Count, to display to you my ideas upon these few words; I am authorized to propose my sentiments, such as they are, by my long experience in theatrical matters.

I think then, that a tragedy ought to consist of a series of paintings, which the subject will supply to the imagination and fancy of one of those excellent painters who deserve to be distinguished by the appellation, not very frequently obtained, of painter-poets. This opinion of mine will be better explained by an example.

Let us suppose, therefore, that any one of these painter-poets who excelled in composition, as Rubens, Julio Romano, Tintoretto, or any of their rivals, were commanded by some sovereign prince to paint the sacrifice of Iphigenia in a large hall: it

is clear that this story or fable must be divided into several pictures, which should display it from the first beginning until the catastrophe or conclusion.

Having formed his plan in his mind, the painter should select the most splendid and interesting situations which present themselves to his judgment. He should assign a separate picture to each of these: in which I allude to the acts of a tragedy. Those situations would certainly be preferred by the painter, which are most proper to lay open the characters of the persons introduced, with the passions by which they were agitated, and which furnish the most business to his pencil, because those situations likewise occasion greater delight, curiosity, surprise, and interest, in the minds of the spectators.

The first picture should represent the Grecian fleet lying at anchor in the harbour of Aulis, with the flags and ensigns unagitated by the wind; and the soldiers and sailors upon the shore, idle and unemployed. In the foreground, on one side, he should paint the royal tent of Agamemnon, in which some of the leaders should be consulting Calchas, upon the most proper means to appease

the gods, and to obtain a wind to waft them to the Trojan shore. Calchas ought to be the principal figure in this picture, who declares the wrath of the gods with astonishment, and pointing to a distant temple upon a lofty promontory, exhorts them to have recourse to the oracle of Apollo; to which proposition Agamemnon and the Grecian heroes appear to consent.

The second picture (which may likewise form a part of the first act) should be the solemn arrival at the camp, of Clytemnestra the wife, and Iphigenia the daughter, of Agamemnon, who is betrothed to Achilles. The princesses, descending from a superb chariot, are received by Agamemnon, the Grecian leaders, and Achilles. Their attendants, and those of the heroes (whom I consider as the chorus of a tragedy) express the general approbation of, and satisfaction at, the approaching nuptials. Achilles, Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, and Agamemnon, appear excessive in their joy.

In the third picture, an altar should appear at a distance, towards which the happy pair are advancing, for the celebration of the nuptial ceremony, together with Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and the

principal commanders of the Grecian host. Spectators, male and female, crowned with flowers, sing the epithalamium, to the sound of numerous instruments. This assemblage should occupy one side of the picture; on the other Calchas, accompanied by priests and sacrificers, presents himself, with a menacing aspect. The attendants of the bride and bridegroom should stop short before him: Agamemnon and Clytemnestra should appear disturbed, and she, ready to faint, should be supported by two of her attendants; Iphigenia, dismayed, should lean on Achilles; that hero, in threatening guise, should appear inflamed with anger and rage; the leaders who accompany them should appear astonished; whilst Calchas, beckoning, should pronounce the oracle, and brandish the sacred steel at Iphigenia, to shew that she is the victim which the gods demand.

In the following picture should be painted Achilles, mad with rage, in the attitude of unsheathing his sword against Calchas and Agamemnon. At the feet of Achilles should appear Clytemnestra, prostrated amidst a company of weeping maidens; Iphigenia should be painted in tears.

Around them should be depicted the Grecian heroes, plunged in thought, and hesitating between compassion for the princess, and religious terror. Ulysses should hold back the arm of the menacing Achilles. The populace, with a different passion represented in every face, should fill up the remainder of the piece.

In another picture, amidst priests led by the fierce Calchas, accompanied by fanatic soldiers, Iphigenia should appear in the act of being torn by force from the arms of the vainly raging and supplicating Clytemnestra. Calchas, in a fit of religious zeal, should be represented in the act of encouraging his satellites to perform their cruel task, shewing them that is the will of the gods. The open space of the picture should be filled with scattered assemblages of the princess's maidens, some struck dumb with terror, others weeping, and others attempting to defend Iphigenia.

In the last picture, whilst at the altar, prostrate before the statue of Diana, the wretched Iphigenia appears, crowned with flowers, pale, and hardly alive: whilst Clytemnestra, who is held at a distance by the guards, should be drawn in the atti-

tude of rushing towards her daughter, whilst the cruel Calchas already appears to stretch out the sacred knife: the furious Achilles should be painted sword in hand, catching hold of the priest's right arm, and at the point of slaying him. His myrmidons, on one side, should appear already levelling their lances, whilst the Grecian bands, on the other, appear prepared to oppose them. Agamemnon should be painted amidst the Grecian leaders, with his face covered; but Diana, in a cloud, with a hind at her feet, should seem to descend towards the altar, satisfied with their obedience. At a distance, the ensigns of the ships should be waving in the air, whilst some of the sails should swell with the breeze, the sailors being employed in mending those which are torn: evident signs of the gods being appeased, the life of Iphigenia secured, Achilles contented, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra consoled, and the action brought to a happy conclusion.*

* I have imagined six pictures: in painting, the situations may be multiplied at pleasure. The painter is not confined to the unity of time, he may wander from it whenever he pleases. He is at liberty to call his work a tragedy, if he will compress, into five pictures, the

It is discoverable at first sight, all the action which this celebrated fable affords to the imagination, may be compressed into these six pictures. The painter, who is a poet without words, being unable to make his characters speak, is necessitated to make them act. Here nothing draws us aside, or misleads us: every thing serves to represent to us the passions of those heroes, on that eminent occasion. It appears to me, that if a series of such pictures, forming a painted tragedy, were well designed and coloured with fire and spirit, by a first rate master, they would leave in the mind of the spectators both terror and compassion, with greater sentiment, energy, and quickness, than a tragedy composed on the same subject, and either read, or represented on the stage.

If you will follow my idea, my dear Count, and will examine the best drawn tragedies which are known, you will find, I think, that they agree perfectly well with it, and so much the better, as they are better designed and disposed. So that I con-

ory or fable, which he attempts to paint. He may call a history, if he thinks proper to extend it beyond that number.

ceive the imperfections of many of them to arise from their not having been formed in this mechanical manner. The less declamatory the fuller of business, and the more picturesque are tragedies so much are they more interesting and more perfect: they likewise furnish the fancy with richer and more interesting subjects for painting: which is the case, above all other epic poems, with the divine Gerusalemme of Tasso, whence have been drawn a million of paintings, sketches, and designs.

All this being true, as appears to me incontestable, we have the true key to judge of the merit of every species of poetry, and particularly of tragedy, and to form both the most perfect plot, and the most interesting disposition of the scenes.

The pantomimes, I mean those of the ancients, with postures, attitudes, and gesticulations, animated the figures or personages of those whom they endeavoured to imitate: they characterized them, and led them from scene to scene by degrees, placing themselves in those forms, and situations, which they supposed would make the greatest impression on the spectators. Thus they conducted any action, either tragic or comic, from beginning to end,

without speaking a word. Pylades and Bathyllus, I believe, thus denominated their representations. The effect of those pantomimes, which the ancients called Saltationes, was wonderful, as Lucian and Apuleius write, together with all the ancients, who have given any account of this kind of spectacle.

To avoid prolixity, I will not enter on the discussion of this obscure subject, the dilucidation of which would require a complete dissertation. I will content myself with citing the verses of Juvenal, which relate to the effect produced by these wordless spectacles, upon the spectators:

Cheironomon Ledam molli saltante Bathyllo,
Tuccia vesicæ non imperat.

One sees a dancing-master capering high,
And raves, &c. DRYDEN.

And those of Manilius, who pronounces the following panegyric upon one of those eminent pantomimes.

Omnis fortunæ vultum per membra reducet:
——— cogetque videre
Præsentem Trojam, Priamumque ante ora cadentem;
Quodque aget, id credes, stupefactus imagine veri.

In one short view they shall present to sight
Whole crowds———
Before the pleas'd spectators Troy shall lie
In ruins, and the wretched Priam die. CREECH.

Referring the curious to the authors abovementioned, for more ample intelligence, I desire them to reflect upon the rage of the public for these theatrical representations, and upon the parties, which became so noisy and vehement for Pylades and Bathyllus, or for Ilas and Pylades, that Augustus and other succeeding emperors found themselves obliged to repress them. That then, which chiefly moves, agitates, terrifies, and rouses the spectator, in a tragedy, is not the words. This is observed by Horace, who says,

Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.

Cold is the tale, distilling through the ear,
Filling the soul with less dismay and fear,
Than where spectators view, like standers-by,
The deed submitted to the public eye. COLMAN.

The interest is hurt by too much wandering in the discourses, by declamations, and by dissertations. It is likewise evident, that the poet, by causing hi

characters to prate, only removes farther from the primary object of the tragedy.

This being true, as I flatter myself that I have proved, the evident result is; that every subject for a tragedy is defective in which there is too much speaking and too little action; that in order to reach the perfection of the art, it is necessary to cut off *ambitiosa ornamenta*; and that by forming the plot itself, like a series of pictures, as I have proposed, (pictures, which will restrain the conversation to that small quantity which is indispensibly necessary to characterize the persons, and to conduct them into those picturesque situations which strike and affect the minds of the spectators), an author will be able to make the best distribution of every theatrical subject, and the most lively, interesting, animated, and moving tragedy which can be written. It is not, however, in the power of every one to dispose the plan of a tragedy in this manner; the disposition of the scenes, which arises from these separate paintings, is very difficult to perform: and that disposition is the part, which at present is the least studied. Careless of probability, our writers abandon themselves to chance. And yet,

upon this disposition, they absolutely depend for a copious supply of materials, towards the composition of the scenes, and for the final success of the tragedy itself.

In writing your plays, my dear friend, you have had in mind something similar to what I have here laid down. I observe that you have constantly endeavoured to make yourself a painter-poet, to put, as it were, every thing into action. If, sometimes, you have suffered yourself to be led away from your usual practice, and have abandoned to narrative the most vigorous and energetic parts of the action; you have, however, been careful not to wander long; like Racine, who *dormitat* * in the account of the death of Hippolytus, which he causes Theramenes to deliver to Theseus: an account now struck out of that beautiful tragedy, which formerly terminated in exciting disgust, instead of moving compassion. I will now deliver my opinion upon every play in your first volume, with which you have favoured me.

The action of Filippo is single, well distributed, and naturally conducted. The argument is not abstruse: the spectators understand the subject in

* Sleeps.

the first scene. The characters are truly drawn: that of Gomez, a courtier, and of that horrible court, is excellent. Philip is painted to the life; the Spanish Tiberius is recognized by every body; from him we hear *suspensa semper, et obscura verba:** in him we see the man *sine miseratione, sine ira:*† we always find him *obstinatum clausumque, ne quo affectu perrumperetur,*‡ masterly strokes of the character of Tiberius, vigorously expressed by Tacitus. Leonardo is a hypocrite worthy of such a master; Perez is a rare example of virtue, among a set of villains, by way of chiaro-oscuro contrast. Isabella is imprudent, ingenuous, and affectionate; and Carlos is such as he is described in the secret history of that reign of wickedness, craft, poison, and blood; he is inconsiderate, impetuous, because he is exasperated; but very unlike his cruel father, and therefore not treated like a son.

The suspicions of the royal tyrant are prominent on the stage; they are put in motion and managed

* Expressions always dark and doubtful.

† Without pity, without anger.

‡ Close and reserved, with a perfect command of himself.

in a masterly manner; they are the knot which perplexes and unravels the action, as in the Mithridate of Racine.

But in this latter, the king degrades himself, by too vulgar an artifice, in order to penetrate into the breast of the too affectionate and incautious Monimia; he proposes to her to espouse his son Zifares, with whom she is in love; a passion which Mithridates suspects: he makes this proposal to her, almost immediately after he has been exaggerating his own passion for her, and has declared the near approach of his own marriage with her. Monimia has therefore many motives to distrust the king's complaisant proposal; for which reason I think it an error of judgment, to make her fall so immediately into the net which he spreads for her; a net which she ought certainly to have seen: neither is there an insensible gradation from his passion already known, and just before newly expressed to Monimia, to his condescension in offering to give her up to another, by which an excuse might be formed for so great a piece of simplicity. This simplicity, considering the character of Monimia, is not founded on nature, but merely adopt-

ed by the poet for his own convenience.* Philip's artifice is much better imagined: he does not propose to Isabella to yield her up to his son Carlos, but only consults her on his conduct; whence suspicion and diffidence do by no means so naturally arise in her mind: nor in the attempt which Philip makes on her heart, in spite of her beloved Carlos, does she open herself with so much honesty, as Monimia in Racine, to the jealous Mithridates. Some of her involuntary motions may serve indeed to increase his jealous suspicions, but they are not strong enough to amount to a competent proof of the love, which she bears the prince. This discovery is reserved for the deceitful, cunning, and crooked Gomez, in the terrible moment when he assures her, that sentence of death is pronounced upon her lover; which he laments with

* Observe that Mithridates, speaking of his love to Monimia, adduces his declining years and his misfortunes, in proof of the greatness of his passion; afterwards he changes his style, and gives them for proper motives, which force him to resign her to his son. This alone would have been sufficient to inspire the fair one with distrust.

such hypocrisy and malice. This artifice is both natural and probable.

I could have wished, however, that the accusation which the king brings against his son, of having designed to murder him, had been better explained: we do not find clearly, whether it is founded on truth, or whether it is a mere pretext of the king's to render his son odious and detestable. If it is a mere invention, it does not seem to me sufficient, that Perez should demonstrate its falsity. Carlos ought to have denied and rejected it with horror, when he was charged with it by Philip, instead of recurring to extraneous evidence. The declaration of his innocence would have served to render more odious the character of his cruel and perfidious father.

From Polinice, I observe that you are very skilful in composing tragedies without love; a difficult enterprize, especially for our modern poets, whose little collection of babyish conceits would be quickly exhausted, if they were debarred from using this copious subject. The story of Polinice is one of the most tragical of all antiquity, and nobody has managed it better than yourself. The

characters are truly drawn; that of Polinice is considerably better than that of Eteocles; which is very proper, as Eteocles, by breaking a solemn compact, occasioned the hatred and war between the brothers. Jocasta and Antigone have exactly the characters which history has given to them. Creon entangles the action by his ambitious and deceitful character; he stirs up his nephews to strife and hatred; he plots and betrays; he endeavours to get rid of the two princes, and to obtain their throne. The scene of the oath is very beautiful; that between the mother and her sons is not less so. The plot is simple, and runs rapidly towards the catastrophe; that is terrible, and strikes the eyes of the spectators.

Some, perhaps, will think the object which Creon has in view in inflaming the resentment of his two furious nephews, not sufficiently decisive. Can he with any probability expect to obtain the disputed sceptre, by the death of both of them at the same time? The expectations of reigning which he can form, seem too weak to induce him to display such a detestable character, and to meditate so many crimes. But, however, as he is so wicked, we may

attribute to him the design of making away with the survivor of the brethren privately, and of openly contesting the succession to the crown with the son of Polinice, who certainly would be the lawful heir in every case. Antigone gives us to understand that Creon's views are directed towards the throne, but I could have wished that he himself had given us the same information in a few words.

I likewise think, that the motive assigned to Eteocles, for suffering his brother to escape out of his hands, and to return in safety to his own camp, whilst, as he observes, he might easily have had him murdered, being in his power, and in his own palace; I think, I say, that this motive is not sufficiently just to serve as a foundation for the catastrophe of the play. His motive is, that his hatred of his brother cannot be satiated by his death, unless he himself accomplish it. You will say that he is blinded by his passion. But can that blind him to such a degree as to make him hazard his own life? Can he be certain of killing his brother, who is quite as resolute and stout as himself? Is he prudent in abandoning to chance both his own revenge, and the sceptre which he may secure to

himself by causing Polinice to be murdered? Can any obstacles to this assassination, which he can naturally foresee, (obstacles depending on the tenderness of the mother, and the affectionate vigilance of the sister), in any manner excuse such an improbable resolution? It would be more justifiable, if Eteocles could point out to us these probable obstacles, arising from the sharp-sightedness of Jocasta and Antigone.

I do not know any subject on the tragic stage, more single, more simple, or more simply disposed, than that of Antigone, which you have been able to confine to four persons. The love of Antigone and Hemon is truly tragic. The stage does not possess female tenderness more affecting than that of Argia, or cruelty more shocking than that of Creon, who ramples even upon paternal affection. So many pposite passions allow room for wonderful events, nd sentiments of heroism; as in the second scene f the third act, between Antigone, Hemon, and reon, and in the following scene between the two st. In act the fifth, scene the fourth, where reon (whose hatred of the princess is truly fran-ic) orders that she shall not be carried to be buried

alive, as he had commanded, but that she shall be carried back to prison; this alteration in a fierce, determined, and relentless heart, like his, appears too sudden, and built upon too slight considerations. But the departure of Antigone, towards the place of her punishment, occasions the meeting between her and Argia, and their tender separation. And I think that the cause of Creon's new resolution is sufficiently done away, by the apology which he himself makes for it, in the fifth scene of the fifth act.

In the same manner it may be said, that in the third and fourth scenes of the fourth act, too much confidence is placed in Hemon by his inhuman father. I do not say that he ought to have any apprehensions of him, on his own account; his son's virtuous disposition may fully quiet him on that score: but having formed a cruel and unrelenting resolution of putting Antigone to death, against his son's will, through motives of hatred and revenge and reasons of state, it appears improbable that he should suppose that Hemon will not endeavour with all his might, to deliver her from the jaws of death; and the more so, as he takes no precaution

against an attempt which is easy to foresee. Creon cannot safely found his own extravagant confidence upon the magnanimity of Hemon, nor will his son be less virtuous, in some respects, if with that force of which he is allowed to make use, he save his mistress from death, and prevent his father from committing a new and odious crime.

I now come to the last tragedy. Although, as I have observed, the three first appear to me to be very beautiful, I am inclined to give the preference to the last. It is full of the true education, and true Roman spirit of that age. You have not fallen, my dear Count, into that common mistake of other poets, the making characters of one period think and talk like those of another. Corneille appears to me, to have run into this error in his Horaces, as he attributes to the Romans, then subjected to a king, the patriotism and public energy of the age of the Gracchi.

In your Virginia, I feel myself transported to the times of the Decemvirs. Your Romans, of both sexes, are they who could not bear even the shadow of slavery; they are

Devota morti pectora liberæ.

Heroes, that death in freedom's cause defied.

BOSCAWEN.

and they think and reason upon this principle. The portraits which you have designed and coloured, are grand and natural. Icilius, a tribune, who predominates in the popular assemblies, displays from the first, the licence of his office, allowed by law and by custom, and bearing a higher value on account of his love of Virginia, and his hatred of the patricians. Virginius, educated in the camp, not in the forum, and accustomed to military discipline, is more moderate towards those, who by existing laws are possessed of command; but when liberty is at stake, is as bold and as resolute as Icilius. Virginia and Icilius love each other, but in the Roman manner; their softest effusions partake of the characteristic qualities of their country. We do not see in them the effeminate expressions, not Roman but romantic, of the Marcias, Servilias, Vitellias, and Sabinas with whom we meet in the musical dramas. Appius is what he ought to have been, in order to become the object of hatred to the Romans, and the just cause of the magnanimous resolution which they took to abolish the

Decemvirate. He is drawn in a manner which excites abhorrence: he is ambitious, partial, and malignant: he abuses the laws and his authority: he is haughty as being a patrician, and still more as being of the Claudian family, the characteristic of which was pride. But on the other hand he is intriguing, cunning, eloquent, and able to seduce the multitude, and to direct it towards his own indirect and crooked ends.

From the unbridled lust, and excessive wickedness of Appius, from the virtuous passion of Virginia, from the free and headstrong love of Icilius, from the paternal affection of Virginius, arises the opposition of the passions, which reign in perpetual heat and agitation throughout the whole piece.

The addresses which these characters make to the people, according to the sensations which each experiences, and the principles and maxims which they deliver to their hearers, are all grand and admirable. We are transported by them into the forum, to the very tribunal of the infamous decemvir: we are interested by the trial; we are terrified at the design of the venal accuser, and the snares of

the unjust judge. We wish to see Virginius triumph, and the instruments of his terrible and afflicting situation undergo the punishment which they deserve.

The third of the third act is a sublime scene of love; but of Roman love, between the father, mother, daughter, and lover; their expressions penetrate to the quick. In the fourth scene of the fourth act, in which Appius endeavours to seduce Virginia, her momentary weakness is introduced with great judgment, least her character should exceed nature. Virginia is a Roman, but tender and affectionate: she appears to yield for an instant, but education and the virtue of her country suddenly regain their predominance. The catastrophe is grand, and what I value above every other beauty, is present: the reader is agitated by terror and compassion; how much more so must the spectator be? I do not know a catastrophe more theatrical than this. The forum, the tribunal, the decemvir, the lictors, the soldiers, the people, so many characters operating at the conclusion, must in my opinion, produce a much greater effect than tha which is much and so justly admired in the Rodo-

gune of Corneille. I am certain that this assertion will be verified by experience.

Having thus dispatched the plans of your tragedies, my dear friend, I shall now mention what particular passages and touches in them have chiefly struck me. To begin with the first, all the crafty discourses of Philip in the second and fourth scenes of the second act, in which his gloomy jealousy appears through the cloak of dissimulation, with which he endeavours to hide it, produced a great effect upon me. It is wonderful with what dexterity and ambiguity of expression, he mingles reproaches with expressions of love, with the black design of calling forth into the faces of the sad lovers, the hues of their hidden passion.

In Polinice, almost all the scenes are sprinkled with such elevated, though natural sentiments, that I should condemn the profusion of them if it were a defect. They have produced such an effect upon me, that in reading them I always feel that quivering sensation which a poet only knows.

It is commonly imagined, that to know whether a poem be really sublime, it is necessary to translate it into another language: if when deprived of the

ornaments which it derives from its own native dress it sustains itself by the single support of majestic, true, and appropriate expressions; if we still find in the translation

Disjecti membra poetæ,

——— the scatter'd poet's limbs;

FRANCIS.

it may safely be pronounced truly sublime. In proof of this assertion, I annex some passages of Polinice, translated into French, as well as I am able to do it. Judge whether they be equally sublime, equally beautiful in one as in the other language. Here is the answer of Jocasta to Polinice, act the second, scene the fourth. The son, to justify the war which he is waging against his brother, declares that he is unwilling to fall into the general disesteem of Greece; the mother answers:

" O la belle vertu! la Grece doit donc t'es-
" timer parceque tu n'est pas plus méchant que ton
" frere! L'objet le plus cher à ton cœur est donc
" le trône. Tu ne songes donc pas quel malheur
" c'est d'être roi. Regard tes aïeux: quel d'entre
" eux régna dans Thebes sans crimes? Le trône où

« Œdipe fut assis est en effet bien illustre! Crains-
« tu que la terre ignore qu'Œdipe eut des enfans?
« Es-tu vertueux? laisse le couronne aux parjures.
« Veux-tu te venger de ton frere? veux-tu qu'il
« devienne l'horreur de Thebes, de la Grece, du
« monde entier? laisse-le régner. Moi-même, le
« front orné du diademe, malgré son vain éclat,
« n'ai-je pas vu couler mes tristes jours dans les
« larmes? n'ai-je pas porté envie à l'état le plus
« vil? O trône! tu n'es qu'une ancienne injustice,
« qu'on a toujours tolérée et toujours détestée.*

* This invective against the character and dignity of royalty, is here placed with infinite propriety and judgment in the mouth of Jocasta, in order to disgust her son with it, and to terminate the quarrel between the brothers, and is one of the most sublime passages in the tragedy. Why then is it blamed with so little judgment and reflection, and so much ignorant malice?

——— Demetri, teque, Tigelli,
Discipularum inter jubeo plorare cathedras.

Begone, Demetrius, to thy lovesome train
Of minstrel scholars, and, in sighing strain,
With soft Hermogenes these rhymes deplore. FRAN.

" Funeste honneur! plût aux dieux que le sort m'en
" eût toujours éloignée! je ne serois pas la mere et
" la femme d'Œdipe: perfides! je ne serois pas
" votre mere,"

I will add the speech with which Jocasta ends the tragedy.

" Que vois-je? un abyme immense s'ouvre sous
" mes pas; les royaumes effrayants de la mort se
" présentent à mes yeux! . . . Ombre pâle de
" Laïus, tu me tends les bras! . . . . à ta criminelle
" épouse! Quel horrible spectacle! . . je te vois per-
" cé de coups! tes mains, ton visage, sont ensan-
" glantés! Tu pleures, malheureux! tu cries ven-
" geance! Quel fut l'impie qui déchira ton sein?
" . . . . . quel fut-il? . . . . ce fut Œdipe, cet
" Œdipe ton fils . . . . . que je reçus dans ton lit
" fumant encore de ton sang.—Mais quelle voix
" prononce mon nom? . . . J'entends un bruit af-
" freux qui remplit d'horreur les enfers . . . un
" cliquetis d'armes et d'épées . . . . . O fils de mon
" fils! . . . . . ô mes fils! . . . . . ombres féroces!
" . . . ô freres! . . . vos fureurs durent donc encore
" après le trépas! . . . . Accours, Laïus; c'est à toi
" de les séparer . . . . Mais j'apperçois à leur côté

" ces infâmes Euménides. Vengeresse Alecton,
" c'est moi qui suis leur mere ; tourne vers moi ton
" pâle flambeau; lance sur moi tes viperes. Voici,
" voici le flanc incestueux qui enfanta ces monstres.
" Furie! que tardes-tu? . . qu'est-ce qui t'arrête?
" Je vole vers toi . . . . Je . . . . meurs." . . . .

In Antigone, the scene of the recognition between her and Argia, the widow of Polinice, is very interesting; all the sentiments in it are both sublime and tender. The second scene of the third act is equally beautiful, in which I admired the energetic answers of Antigone to Creon, who offers to spare her life, upon condition of her espousing Hemon. The following scene between Hemon and Antigone, who love each other, but with a flame adapted to their different passions, is equally touching. That command of the princess to her lover, who wishes to avenge himself on his father by killing himself:

Vivi Emon, te'l commando. E' in noi delitto
L'amarci tal, ch'io col morir lo ammendo,
Col viver tu.

and that laconic dialogue between Creon and Antigone:

Creonte. Scegliesti?
Ant. Ho scelto.
Creonte. Emon?
Ant. Morte.
Creonte. L'avrai.

is worthy of Sophocles. The dignity is admirable in which Antigone clothes her just and deserved hatred of Creon, when in the second scene of the same act, she sharply reprimands Hemon for forgetting the duty of a son towards his father. The parting of the two princesses in the third act, brings tears into my eyes. In the Virginia, I am pleased and interested with every thing: the open eloquence of Icilius, the crafty speeches of Appius, and the tender conversation between the father and the daughter. The third scene of the third act, between the mother, the father, the daughter, and the lover, deserves to be much meditated upon. Among the surprising strokes of which it is full, I observed a masterly touch of the pencil, which alludes to the catastrophe, and was struck at it: it is the following:

Virginio. Oh donna! Oh di quai prodi
Perisce il seme, col perir di queste
Libere, altere, generose piante!
Icilio. Ben altrimenti piangere dovremo,
Se fosser nati i figli. A duro passo
Tratti saremo or noi——Svenarli, o schiavi
Lasciarli—Ah! schiavo il sangue mio? Non mai—
Padre io non son;—se il fossi—
Virginio. —— Orribil lampo
Mi fan tuoi detti traveder---Deh! taci,
Taci per or.

This scene appears to me to be a model for tragic poetry, and the most beautiful which is contained in the four tragedies.

I foresee, my dear friend, that having read these observations of mine thus far, you will consider me as too partial to you. By no means: truth has dictated these praises to me: truth likewise forces me to mention, what I could still wish to find in your tragedies abovementioned.

I have already made some reflections, in the proper place, touching the conduct of the plot. I said freely, in a friendly manner, what came into my mind; I hinted at a defect, perhaps erroneously;

I defended it, perhaps unnecessarily. At present what I have to say, may deserve a more serious attention. In the first place, in Virginia I am not contented; when I read it over with the catastrophe, Virginia is slain by her own father; the people revolts: but the wicked Appius, after so many odious and execrable misdeeds, after having, by his tyrannical lust, raised up in a father, who had deserved so well of Rome, a desperation so necessary and merciful; after having been displayed to us throughout the whole piece, as worthy of the abhorrence of every one, and having excited that sensation in our minds, he not only does not undergo, by his death and punishment due to his crimes, in conformity to history, but he even triumphs, and menaces the unhappy Virginius, and the tumultuous people: and nothing can be deduced from his last impudent harangues, except that he remains at least unpunished. This unexpected catastrophe, which is contrary to the laws of tragedy, and more so to the desire which you have insinuated into the minds of the spectators, in so masterly a manner, by penciling with vigour the odious character of the Decemvirs, must necessarily send them

back dissatisfied and disappointed, at seeing this abhorred personage triumph, and virtue afflicted and oppressed. In my opinion, to end the play well, you ought to make him die on the stage; you may bring this about in a very small number of verses.

Perhaps also the close of Antigone may not be satisfactory to every reader. I know very well that the vile character of Creon is such, that the death of an only son would not drive him to despair. But the few verses by which he ends the play, would lead us to think that the death of his son is a matter of indifference to him, although he has shewn himself to be sufficiently affectionate towards him, during the course of the tragedy, and he has tried every method to satisfy his passion: neither his reproaches nor his menaces, have been able to induce him to take the least prudential precaution. Paternal love then is predominant in the mind of Creon; but when Hemon kills himself under his eyes, he views with coldness and indifference the chastisement of Heaven.

In the play of Philip, I could have wished that that tyrant, at the end of the last scene, would have

sent Gomez away, and would have remained alone to feed with horrid delight, worthy of his character, upon the miserable spectacle of his son and wife lying dead: and that in a few ferocious expressions of contempt for them, he would have satiated his monstrous vengeance with delight and complacency; declaring their innocence, and that he had made this sacrifice to his cruel jealousy alone. In this manner, I think, the last touches ought to have been given to his horrible character; he would have excited a general and expressive abhorrence in the representation, as he deserves. It will be said that I suffer myself to be led away by the example of Shakspeare, and that what I would have inserted in Philip, would occasion a sensation of horror in the audience against the poet. But in performing this, I should conceive myself to have reached the end, which every tragic writer ought to propose to himself.

Every poet, as every painter, has his own peculiar style. Sophocles, Euripides, Corneille, and Racine have each his own. Each of these two modern poets has formed a separate school: that of the first tends towards the grand, the sublime, the

majestic, the turgid: the second inclines towards the beautiful, the elegant, the accurate, the exact. Both have had their followers, and their partizans: Crebillon distinguished himself in the school of Corneille: in that of Racine I have not observed any tragic poet of great reputation. Voltaire formed an appropriate style for himself; he endeavoured to imitate both the one and the other: he likewise abandoned himself to his own genius, and rendered himself original. Shakspeare has an extravagant, rough, and savage manner, but he draws the character and passions of his personages after nature. We have no tragic poets: you could not imitate therefore any of our writers. Neither do I see that you have constantly imitated either the Greeks or the French: to describe you, I will make use of the expression of Tiberius, respecting Curtius Rufus—

Curtius Rufus videtur mihi ex se natus.

Curtius Rufus appears born from himself.

You are born from yourself, and have created a manner entirely your own, and I foresee that your style will become our first school. If, however, after an attentive consideration, I wish to

find some one with whom I may compare you, it appears to me that, in some places, in energy, brevity, and vigour, you resemble Shakspeare more than any other. As a proof of this, permit me to transcribe some passages of this poet, which I formerly translated into verse and prose, without any object, merely for my amusement. I flatter myself that from these you will be convinced, that my opinion is not far from the truth.

Richard the Third, in the fifth scene of the fifth act of the tragedy which bears his name, awaking suddenly from sleep, in which he had dreamed that ruin and death were denounced against him, by all those whom he had formerly murdered, speaks in the following words.

Presto un altro destrier . . . Le mie ferite
Presto fasciate . . . O Dio, pietà ! . . . Ma . . . piano . . .
Fu sogno . . . Oh come mi contristi in sogno,
O coscienza codarda ! . . . Un fosco lume
Tremola nelle faci ; . . . a mezzo il corso
Non è la notte . . . Gelido sudore
Mi scorre sópra le aggricciate carni . . .
Perchè ? . . . Temo di me ? . . . Io son quì solo . . .
Riccardo ama Riccardo . . . Ed io . . . son io . . .
V'è quì un sicario ? . . . No . . . Sì . . io vi sono . . .

Dunque fuggiam.... Che..; da me stesso? ... Sì,
Da me stesso. Perchè? ... Perchè vendetta
Non faccia ... Come! .. in me di me? Io m'amo ...
M'amo? per qual ragion? per qualche bene
Ch'io mi sia fatto? Ah! no: m'odio più tosto
Per mille abbominevoli, odiosi
Delitti che ho commesso ... Un scellerato
Io son ... Mento ... Nol sono. O stolto, meglio
Parla di te; .. non adularti, o stolto ...
La mia coscienza ha mille lingue; ognuna
Fa il suo racconto, e ciaschedun racconto
Condanna me di scellerato ed empio ...
Spergiuro, .. e quanto esser si può spergiuro;
Ed assassino, il più atroce di quanti,
Sian stati mai. Tanti delitti miei,
E orrendi tutti, al tribunal son tutti,
Gridando: E reo, è reo ..; Son disperato ....
Niun fra' viventi m'ama: niun, s'io moro,
Avrà di me pietà. Come l'avrebbe,
S'io di me stesso in me pietà non sento?
Tutti gli spettri di color ch'io uccisi,
Veder mi parve alla mia tenda, e tutti
Minacciarmi vendetta al nuovo giorno; &c.

In the same tragedy, Queen Elizabeth, widow of Edward IV. makes the following answer to Richard, who demands her daughter in marriage,

and asks how he may be able to deserve the love of the princess:

Mandale, per colui che i suoi fratelli
Empio svenò, due sanguinosi cori;
E siano in essi i nomi lor scolpiti.
Ella allor piangerà; tu le presenta
In quell' istante insanguinato velo,
Che degli amati suoi germani il sangue
Bevve, e comanda a lei che se ne asciughi
Gli occhi bagnati in pianto. E se non basta
Questo tuo dono, e di te degno dono,
A far che t'ami, ancor le scrivi; tutte
Le glorie tue a lei racconta, e dille
Che svenasti i suoi zii, i suoi congiunti
Tutti, per amor suo . . . *etc.*

In the fourth scene of the fifth act of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo speaks thus to his mistress, whom he believes to be dead in the tomb, before he drinks the poison:

" Oh amor mio! oh mia sposa! La morte, che
" ha succhiato il mele de' tuoi fiati, non ha ancora
" acquistato potere sulla tua bellezza; no, ancora
" non sei vinta dalla morte; ancora l' insegna della
" beltà spiega le sue porpore sulle tue guance e sulle

" tue labbra, e la pallida bandiera della morte fin
" là ancora non s' inoltra . . . . Ah cara Giulietta!
" perchè sei ancora così bella? . . . Io voglio sem-
" pre rimaner teco, e non partir mai da questo nero
" albergo. Quì fermar voglio il mio sempiterno
" riposo, e scuotere il giogo delle avverse stelle, che
" son stanco di soffrire. Occhi miei, saziate i vos-
" tri ultimi sguardi; prendete, o mie braccia, i vos-
" tri amplessi estremi; e voi, mie labbra, voi porte
" della vita, con un pudico bacio sigillate il mio
" eterno contratto colla morte."

If this tragic spirit of Shakspeare, my dear Count, has passed into you, as I think it has, it is much improved by your more extensive knowledge, and that of the age in which we live. In you, therefore, we find that which the English poet did not possess, the art of restraining his irregular fancy, and of confining it within the bounds of probability and propriety, so as to produce perfect and admirable tragedies.

Nothing remains but to speak of the poetic style of your productions. I have already said that style is the colouring of poetry; it is equally so of tragedy. Tragedy also has its own poetic beauties;

its own warmth. In certain places and situations we may say of writers in tragedy:

Fervet immensusque ruit.

Foaming through his course,
Rolls onward with resistless force,
His full, his deep-mouth'd song. BOSCAWEN.

We ought to be able to give the style of tragedy the appellation of figurative,* impetuous, sonorous, and flowery:

Monte decurrens velut amnis.

As swoln by floods the river's tide. BOSCAWEN.

This flowing, harmonious, and concatenated style,

* The style which I call *figurative*, is that in which the greater part of the words impress some image on the mind of the reader. Virgil possesses this picturesque style above all other poets: I shall therefore draw examples from him in a larger quantity.

Telumque imbelle sine ictu
Conjecit, rauco quod protinus ære repulsum
Extremo clypei nequicquam umbone pependit....

Validis ingentem viribus hastam
In latus inque feri curvam compagibus alvum

atones for the want of rhyme in those who write in blank verse; no trifling want in our modern poetry,

Contorsit. Stetit illa tremens, uteroque recusso
Insonuere cavæ gemitumque dedere cavernæ ....,
Ponto nox incubat atra:
Intonuere poli, crebris micat ignibus æther....
Insequitur cumulo præruptus aquæ mons....
Furor impius intus
Sæva sedens super arma, et centum vinctus ahenis
Post tergum nodis, fremit horridus ore cruento....
Ter sese attollens cubitoque adnixa levavit,
Ter revoluta toro est, oculisque errantibus, alto
Quæsivit cœlo lucem, ingemuitque reperta....
Obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit...
Sibila lambebant linguis vibrantibus ora....

The following examples of the same kind of ornamented style are from Horace:

Jam fulgor armorum fugaces
Terret equos, equitumque vultus....
Hinc tibi copia
Manabit ad plenum benigno
Ruris honorum opulenta cornu....,
Obliquo laborat
Lympha fugax trepidare rivo....

for without rhyme its character can hardly be poetical. I have admired this style in many parts of

Scimus ut impios
Titanas, immanemque turmam,
Fulmine sustulerit caduco,
Qui terram inertem, qui mare temperat
Ventosum, et umbras regnaque tristia.

The following are from Tasso:

Sebben l'elmo percosso, in suon di squilla
Rimbomba orribilmente, arde, e sfavilla....
In gran tempesta di pensieri ondeggia....
Treman le spaziose atre caverne,
E l'aer cieco a quel rumor rimbomba.

And from Ariosto:

E nella face de' begli occhi accende
L'aurato strale, e nel ruscello ammorza,
Che tra vermigli e bianchi fiori scende....
Se non vedea la lagrima distinta
Tra fresche rose e candidi ligustri
Far rugiadose le crudette pome;
E l'aura sventolar l'aurate chiome....
Sta su la porta il re d'Algier, lucente
Di chiaro acciar, che il capo gli arma e il busto;
Come uscito di tenebre serpente.—*etc.*

your tragedies, to some of which I have pointed above; but I ingenuously confess, as a friend, that

These are from Camoens, that every nation may have its due praise:

Debaixo dos pes duros dos ardentes
Cavallos, treme a terra, os valles sonaõ....
As mays, que o som terrivel escutaraõ,
Aos petos os filhinhos appettaraõ....

And speaking of the sound of the trumpet:

Pellas concavidades retumbando....
Os ventos brandamente respiravaon
Das naos as vellas concavas inchando....
Subitas trovoadas temerosas,
Relampagos que o ar em fogo acendem,
Negros chuveiros, noites tenebrosas,
Bramidos de trovoens, que o mundo fendem.

In tragedy, the following examples are taken from Seneca;

Mihi gelidus horror ac tremor somnum excutit;
Oculosque nunc huc pavida, nunc illuc ferens,
Oblita nati, miserum quæsivi Hectorem:
Fallax per ipsos umbra complexus abit....
En alta muri decora congesti jacent
Tectis adustis, regiam flammæ ambiunt....

in general, in my opinion, you have neglected it. You have attended to the sentiments without caring to dress them handsomely.

Diripitur ardens Troja, nec cælum patet
Undante fumo: nube ceu densa obsitus,
Ater favilla squallet Iliaca dies.

I have thought proper to transcribe so great a number of examples, in order to give a clearer idea of this *figurative* style of poetical expression, which paints whatever it describes, and excites in the pupils of the Muses an ardent desire of imitation. This style continually presents to the fancy, new objects and unexpected beauties, and puts into the mouths of the personages introduced, that kind of eloquence which is proper to their situation, their characters, and their passions.

Without this style, tragedy, like every other species of poetry, will be heavy, and will have a faded appearance: although it be well designed, drawn, and disposed, it will only appear like a mere design, which however excellently and exactly it may be delineated, yet, through the want of the attractive power of colouring, will never produce the admiration, pleasure, and delight, which arises from a picture of Titian, or of Paul Veronese.

The verses of such a tragedy, however elegant and full of sentiment, will only appear as prose, divided into lines of eleven syllables. They never can produce in the

I agree that Horace says in one place:

Et tragicus plerumque dolet sermone pedestri;

The tragic hero, plunged in deep distress,
Sinks with his fate, and makes his language less.

COLMAN.

But in another he teaches us:

Effutire leves indigna tragœdia versus.

Stern tragedy rejects too light a vein. COLMAN.

I observe that throughout you have a predilection for the pencil of Michael Angelo, neglecting, as it were, that of Corregio and Albano: and when an elegant gracefulness naturally presents itself to you, you avoid it, and prefer a strong, harsh, and even rugged, expression, in the style of Dante.

mind that transport and rapture, which arises from flowery and high-coloured poetry; and tragedy in prose is a wretched invention of the present unpoetical age.

But young poets ought to be careful, not to be too prodigal of this picturesque style, for fear of falling into the bombastic. The moderation which I recommend, is not easily put in practice: it is necessary to restrain the imagination, to force our self-love; neither can it always be said when or where it ought to have place. This kind of knowledge is reserved for great poets alone.

In Philip, for example, in the second scene of the second act, you write,

Basso terror d'infame tradimento
A re, che merti esser tradito, lascia.

This transposition of the verb renders the sense somewhat obscure at first sight: I doubt not, that you see that you might have said with greater clearness, and perhaps with greater elegance,

Basso terror di tradimento infame
Lascia ad un re, che merti esser tradito.

In Polonice, act the fourth, scene the first, I find,

Ma il sospettar, natura
Fassi in chi regna, sempre:

Perhaps you might have written with greater clearness,

Ma il sospettar diventa
Natura sempre in quel che regna.

I desist from quoting other passages, because you will observe them yourself much better than I can: but I must observe, that this hardness and ambiguity is frequently prejudicial to the sentiments themselves, which are noble, sublime, and often new.

Corneille is certainly more majectic, and more energetic than Racine: but Racine, through the elegance of his diction, and the flowing sweetness of his poetry, is always superior upon the stage. Apostolo Zeno is more theatrical, more grave, more sentimental, and more various than Metastasio; but Metastasio reigns, and Apostolo Zeno is entirely excluded from the stage; an evident proof of the great consequence of sweetness, melody, and beauty of style.

Michael Angelo's picture of the last judgment is looked upon with admiration by painters; they draw from thence foreshortenings, postures, attitudes, and delineations, as studies: but the paintings of Rubens, Titian, Corregio, and Guido, charm alike painters and connoisseurs, the ignorant and the skilful.

You have endeavoured, with great assiduity, to form your style upon our ancient models: Dante principally has seduced you, and you have imitated him perfectly. But the audience before whom your admirable tragedies must be represented, is not that of the age of Dante. Our language at that time stammered in its childhood; now that it is arrived

at maturity it declaims with eloquence, majesty, and gracefulness. Do you suppose that if Dante lived in our age, he would write now as he wrote then,

Or mentre io gli cantava cotai note,
O coscienza, o dolor che il mordesse,
Forte springava con ambo le piote;

and a hundred other similar oddities? No, surely. It is certainly praise-worthy to imbibe the majestic sentiments of Dante, to imitate his forcible images and nervous expressions; but I am of opinion, that they ought to be translated into the more cultivated and more flowing language of the present day. Who, at this time, will make use of his Florentinisms, and his grammar? Certainly nobody. And he, who

Quædam nimis antiquè . . . . pleraque durè,
Dicere credit eum, ignavè multa fatetur,
Et sapit, et mecum facit, et Jove judicat æquo;

— that sometimes their style uncouth appears,
Or their harsh numbers rudely hurt our ears,
Or that full flatly flows the languid line—
He who owns this, has Jove's assent and mine.

FRANCIS.

Generally the omission of the article, as:

Patria apprender cos' è . . . .

and:

Mie angoscie . . . .

and:

Il dubitar di quanto re ti afferma;

renders the verse harsh and scabrous.

The frequent insertion of a superfluous *io*, or the contraction of it, as:

Ne a mi tu aprirlò
Dovevi mai, nè posso io udir . . . .

and:

In petto i' mi sent' io:

renders it hard.

To say,

Del re non temi:

instead of,

Non temere del re:

and,

Nè tu men chiedi
Ragione;

instead of,

Non me ne chieder ragione.

likewise the use of too complicated phrases, as:

Arbitro tu mi danna
A qual più vuoi castigo. . . .
O trista
Deplorabil dei re sorte!

also the addition of an unnecessary *si*, as;

Reo non s'è fors' egli?

and the expression:

Tu hai per hai;

as;

La mia t' hai tu;

and such like antique obsolete elegancies, cause ambiguity and equivoque, and force those who recite or read them aloud to contract their lips, in order to pronounce the verse.

I am persuaded, my dear friend, that all these modes of expression, which you have adopted, and which you might have avoided with so little trouble, are of infinite prejudice to the great beauties of your tragedies; and I wish I were able to persuade you to take them away.

In truth, neither Ariosto nor Tasso, (great and respectable names) nor Guarini, nor Redi, nor Filicaja, nor Guidi, nor Chiabrera, nor Testi, nor

Marini, nor any other celebrated poet ever wrote in this style: and to say the truth, I should prefer, in their company, the rejection of these affectations of the days of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, to the imitation of them, under the banners of the divine Dante, who certainly was divine for that age; but, tell me ingenuously, would he be so at present? A question which I think is already answered. Certainly, if so great a poet should be born in our days, and should obtain the title of divine for his poetry, he would never acquire it for his language.

For these friendly observations upon the style of your tragedies, as well as for some remarks which I have made upon the conduct of them, I have already given Horace's excuse. Where perfections and beauties are so numerous, trifling faults (if they really are so), do not take away the prize.

They are moles (if you will), but moles upon limbs of divine formation.

I finish, my dear Count, with two verses of Horace:

——— Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.

Farewell; and if a better system's thine,
Impart it frankly, or make use of mine.

FRANCIS.

I have shewn my respect for you too much in this letter, to render it necessary to renew the protestations of it in this place; I content myself therefore to remain your obedient servant.

RANIERI DE' CALSABIGI.

Naples,
August, 20 1783.

NOTES.

Page 1.—*The English are equally*] This opinion, entertained by a foreigner, of the state of our theatre, may perhaps justify an attempt to restore it to credit abroad; and shew that however it may meet with obstacles from prejudice, it ought rather to find favour generally, as public spirited, than be disregarded as presumptuous.

Page 4.—*That it is composed according*] Gravina exposes the pedantic absurdity of the followers of Trissino; not, indeed, in their adherence to the unities, but in a *real* pedantry, their forming their plays exactly upon the model of certain ancient ones (as the Œdipus for instance); and imitating their situations, merely because Aristotle praises them.

Page 5.—*Why as if despairing*] The reason is, that following the example of Politiano in his

Orfeo, Italy has not chosen to walk in the steps of the Greek poets, in composing for songs and recitative. I enlarged upon the subject of the material of imitation in one of some Letters on the Drama, lately published; in which the two modes of introducing theatrical music are distinguished, and it is shewn which is the corrupt, and which the genuine. I shall now add my opinion, that the Greek play, *improved upon its own principles*, is that form of serious drama, which is alone necessary to be cultivated, either in France, Italy, or England; either where the piece is declaimed, or sung. In the first place I will observe, that whichever of these modes is adopted, its form and essence still remains. Now, if we inquire the opinion of professors in the art of music, we may find that an eminent one, Dr. Burney, has sufficiently, for our purpose, described what sort of composition would give effect to music. In Vol. I. p. 171. of his History of Music he speaks favourably, and I think elsewhere more so, of the probable effect of tragedies set to music; and in Vol. IV. p. 13. says, that narrative poetry is improper for songs, but that short effusions, such as those exhibited *in the ancient tragedies*, or more

dern operas, are most fitted for them; and that Voltaire's objection to them, in the opera, was ill-founded. Does it not, therefore, follow, that a play upon the ancient model would have many qualities, if not every one, that even the musical critic could desire? It is not to the purpose here to decide whether tragedies ought to be spoken or sung, as that acute critic Bishop Hurd has recommended: this must be regulated by the perhaps variable customs of different countries. Metastasio tells us, that his dramas were well received in whichever way they were acted; and I have myself, at Florence, been a witness of this.

This principle of the ancient play evidently extends to comic pieces, and those of the most trifling sort. It may not be improper here to mention a circumstance, which must be deemed curious by the philosophical critic, if he reflects upon it. Owing to the theatrical prohibitions which have been established by our laws, however abstract reasoning may condemn them, there seems an opportunity afforded of seeing parts of English plays performed in recitative; for the necessity of not interfering with the summer theatre, forces upon the

inferior theatres in the suburbs the use of recitative; without which, and without curtailing the pieces, this sort of exhibition would be found objectionable. Whether if such an experiment were made, this new entertainment would grow too attractive to be longer winked at, I cannot say. The poetical form of our tragic pieces seems sufficiently to suit recitative: but comedy would perhaps best, for this purpose, be written in that kind of verse, which is adopted in compositions of similar character, with so much judgment, and with so striking an effect, by Mr. Anstey.

If, for the sake of variety, or any other reason, this use of recitative should somewhere or other obtain among us, the poet who composes for it might do well to attend to a remark dwelt upon by those critics who have written on the opera. They observe, that there is a greater probability in music considered as the language of the gods, or heroes of fabulous times, than as that of such characters as are generally introduced in tragedy. Perhaps advantage might be taken of this effect, and recitative invariably adopted in some such compositions as I alluded to in the fourth letter on the Drama; which

whether called mask, opera, or by any other appellation, might be allowed to exceed the bounds of regular tragic probability, if it delighted by raising wonder. I do not infer from the criticisms of musical writers, that they would think improper the form of drama here recommended, to be accompanied by music.

If, however, too little of the effect of music should be attainable with it, the French opera has not those abrupt transitions from long to short verses, and from blank verse to rhymes, which produces the same effect on the ear, as the mixture of prose and verse, and are by no means analogous to the varied expression even of the most opposite sentiments in nature. I had this more rational form of opera, as a poetical composition, in my thoughts, in the sixth letter on the Drama, when I spoke of varying the *verse* according to the prevailing temper of mind.

Page 5.—*Perfected by Metastasio.*] It will follow from the circumstance of their being radically defective, that they can never be perfected. The Greeks, it is true, as has been remarked by Metastasio (see the sixth letter on the Drama), set

an example to the Italians, of their mode of improperly changing the metre; but that is, where they wandered from the true principles of their own drama, which had in it the seeds of perfection, while the Italian opera is incapable of producing it. But the laws of the former would, as I have intimated in the twelfth letter, be observed to more effect, and in fuller perfection, by writers in a language that Dr. Burney remarks, partly from its own nature, and partly from the skill of Metastasio, has shewn itself, beyond others, proper for music.

The discovery which, I presume, the reader now may acknowledge both to be a real one, and not exhibited to the world before, is the only one that appears from the first edition of the Battle of Eddington. It was suggested by simple reflection, as deducible from the nature of dramatic composition; and did not, till the second edition, appear jointly with another, the result of observation and diligent study of dramatic effect, during the few years that intervened after the first, and before the second edition. This was the only one which could have attracted notice in the play, when it was criticized by the Monthly Reviewers.

Page 6.—*Most commonly to private noblemen*] Private theatres, in which every one is either able or willing to be pleased, are excellent places to have the more famous works represented, which are found too declamatory, and possessed of too little business, to entertain a mixed audience, and on that account, to become patterns, in every respect, of dramatic composition.

Page 6.—*Those companies of actors*] I conceive that when extreme effect, as far as is consistent with chaste writing, shall be more studied by dramatic authors, excellent acting, however desirable, will be less necessary *to support a theatre*, for the very reason that the decision of a mixed audience is not always that of delicate taste.

Page 11.—*Begin by establishing*] Unless it is a country that, like England, possesses a capital both populous, and having theatres open every night in the year, every expence being borne to assist the representation; and not only at carnivals, or for a small portion of time; it will not be in the power of a prince to establish such a theatre, as will teach a poet the real demands of an audience. He will not be able to procure the opi-

nion of a large body of people, who, free to judge, habituated to observe, and unprejudiced by novelty, will applaud according to that degree of effect which is attainable.

Page 15.—*A musical stage almost constantly*] Thus had Politiano employed his great musical and poetical talents, in composing plays on the ancient plan for music, instead of inventing the opera, tragedy might have had that support in Italy, which was transferred to another composition; and we might at this day have seen, at the Haymarket, plays of the ancient sort, acted nearly in the ancient manner. It might interest lovers of literature to try the experiment of setting to music, and acting some of those already written in the Italian language.

Page 15.—*Debates on morality*] Moral and political reflections give a relief to epic composition, and are there proved compatible with good sense and poetry. In the drama they are equally pleasing and instructive, to those who can, and who cannot be delighted with such qualities. Why, therefore, introduced with the same judgment, are they less proper? Political sentiments often harmonize with

that pomp of spectacle, from which tragedy derives advantage; its characters are those, in whose mouths such sentiments are natural; and the audience delights in hearing modes of policy mentioned with praise, which are congenial with their government and education. Shakspeare, and the Greek tragedians, no less than Corneille, introduce political topics.

Page 18.—*In spite of*] Whether Johnson's judgment in this point of criticism, as well as in others, be worthy of his strong mind, let the public determine. *Adhuc sub judice lis est.* I have been led very much to exhibit my dramatic opinions in the present form, because it will shew how a person, divested of the prejudices of an Englishman, and therefore placed, as it were, in a different point of view, may consider the present state of the English stage.

As to that universal singularity, here attributed to our nation, it is more problematical. This imputation seems an echo of Voltaire's, who applies to us, in this sense, the

Et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos.

——— the Britons———
A race of men from all the world disjoin'd.
DRYDEN.

Page 19.—*We are often made to laugh*] I have attempted to prove, both why this is tolerated on our stage, and why it is improper. It is an illegitimate sort of stage effect, and it is possible to have a legitimate one.

Page 20.—*He mixed prose and verse*] Those who do not, as I confess myself to do, experience, in a degree, both interruption and disgust, while setting or reading out modern plays so written, may think the custom worthy of being kept up.

Page 20.—*They seldom succeeded*] It might have been prudent for Rowe or Otway, to have aspired to be the first regular, instead of the second irregular tragic writer. Foreigners then might have thought them more upon a par with the French poets.

Page 20.—*Still continues to domineer*] This is of course true: and yet fine as he is, and possessing variety from his faults, an audience does not find in every part of him that degree of stage effect which they require. It is not that they feel any

edium at the representation of his plays; for the universal veneration he is held in, and the familiarity of most people with his works, make an audience enter thoroughly into their spirit. Happening to be once in company with a principal actor, I heard him remark this, saying, that Shakspeare's flights of poetry would not now be well received at the theatre, if it were not that almost every body had them by heart. It seems strange, that Shakspeare should have any thing in his faults in common with the most regular tragedians; but it is a fact, and may prove, that when a theatre has not been long established, and constantly resorted to, all the requisite knowledge cannot have been acquired by the dramatic poet.

Page 30.—*They are nevertheless the best in the world*] After having so justly and so forcibly displayed the imperfections of the French stage, it may seem more extraordinary that the writer should appear to prefer the poets he has been describing to Shakspeare. We may see in this the prejudices of a scholar, who knows so well the value of rules of composition, that he is less easily pleased where they are transgressed; but Dr. Warton observes

well, that the declamation of the former is no less opposite to the true nature of tragedy than the introduction of comic scenes by the latter.

Page 31.—*Of a series of paintings*] This is the most useful definition of tragedy there can be, for it perpetually summons the poet to the employment which is most necessary, that of increasing the business of the play; and in consequence, by keeping up attention to the spectacle, preventing any diminution of the interest. But though it be the most useful description of tragedy, it is a less complete one than Dr. Warton's, who says, that it should be made up of action and pathos. A picture may display pathos, but pathos may be represented on a stage, where it could not be in a picture. For instance, Raphael could never communicate to the spectator, the effect of those words of Jane Shore, which Dr. Warton quotes as so peculiarly pathetic. This definition, therefore, is more complete, as it takes in *the quality of the words*. It, however, takes in only the quality of those words which express or excite passion, and not of any interesting sentiments whatsoever. Perhaps these may be included in the definition, as remotely contributing,

by their connection with the rest of the piece, to influence or characterize the more impassioned parts. But if they are to be supposed subordinate to them, upon the principle laid down by critics, that the sole object of tragedy, is to move the passions, then action too is a subordinate part of it: and I think it plain that sentiments are calculated to form the subject of genuine poetry, and as welcome to the audience as any thing else. I therefore, allowing the two first to be of the greatest consequence, should consider tragedy as made up of action, pathos, and sentiment.

When a large company is invited to a feast, the custom is not to provide only the greatest delicacies, though disagreeable to many guests, but to suit, if possible, the taste of every one. This example ought to be followed. The mode of dramatic composition it is my object to recommend, is that which draws many of its principles solely from practice. Very noble theories have been formed by the critics, and which modified as daily observation may enable us gradually to do, are calculated to produce perfection both in dramatic poetry, and dramatic criticism. But I must ever think,

that no writer has attained that perfection; and that in England there would be the greatest scope for improvement in this branch of literature, did not the impediments to the reception of pieces at the theatres royal stand a good deal in its way.

A satirical poet,* who possesses a very pure dramatic taste, has supposed the managers to be obliged to bring forward compositions without merit, in order to gratify the taste of the audience. As I was of the same opinion, before I made the drama my study, I cannot wonder at it. The truth is, that an English audience, in respect of the *quantity* of talents displayed in a piece, is no judge; while in respect to the *quality* of them, and the question, whether they are exerted as they ought, it is a supreme judge; and its decisions, when uninfluenced by friends or enemies of the poet, to be generally abided by. It condemns a piece, good or bad, according as it is deficient in this quality; and on the other hand, it extols and delights in one, whatever its merit, which is possessed of it. Thus by exacting more effect from the poet, it may render

* See the notes of the Mæviad

tragedy in future, a more energetic, and animated species of composition.

Forming, sometimes, no less than my readers, a part of this audience, so often undervalued, I cannot help thinking myself interested in excusing it, where it ought to be excused, and in not letting the blame, when due to the managers, fall on us. I am persuaded, that the *two kings* for the time being may have been led to encourage the *national* hatred of what is *Athenian*; and everybody can witness, that there have been plays composed with thought, and therefore having some chance of success, rejected; and that others equally devoid of good sense and variety, have been brought on, and damned. This, no doubt, arises greatly from the amiable partialities of private friendship; but my purpose is only to shew its effect upon the evening entertainment of the public, as well as upon the dramatic art.

Taste is allowed to be the result of knowledge. If two sets of people consider an object, acquainted in different degrees with its properties, that object is not, in fact, the same to both; though if the knowledge of the informed were transferred to the

ignorant persons, they might prove, that it was not for want of understandings equally respectable with the others, that their judgments were more erroneous.

It is indeed certain, that no absolute harm can result from this discouragement of the drama. The bigotry and attachment to system, ridiculed in the Apothecaries by Moliere, might have been attended with the loss of health, nay, of life. But the manager may *purge* the passions, after his own manner, without any similar terrible consequence. I flatter myself, however, that in the course of these notes, I shall enable the reader to *calculate* taste, and to pronounce on the dramatic decisions of a manager, or a reviewer, by a reference *to the simplest rule in arithmetic.*

Page 31.—*To paint the sacrifice of Iphigenia*] In my Letters on the Drama, it will be seen I had then read this part too hastily to form a right judgment of what the author meant by the *story* of Iphigenia; but I knew this made no difference in the argument, and should not have hazarded any thing that could mislead.

Page 40.—*That then which agitates, &c. is no words*] I should in prudence here call the reader

attention to this passage, in support of my system; and also to the subsequent quotation from Horace, on which it is founded. I ask two questions; first, has any scholar disputed that opinion of Horace? and secondly; if now called upon either to approve or condemn it, which will he do?

Page 42.—*To put, as it were, every thing into action*] When these tragedies came out, I did not peruse the publication, as will be seen by the last note, with the attention I have since paid it. I had then only read the Virginia, and the Brutto Primo, of all the tragedies which appeared in that second edition. I could not, therefore, form a judgment how far the author had realized the idea this ingenious critic had, of tragedy. It will accordingly appear that I readily and joyfully gave him credit for every improvement attributed to him by his friend; and conceived that the example of the poet exactly allied with the precept of the critic.

But though the Count writes in a style, which, whatever fault real taste may find with it, it must be gratified by, as simple, eloquent, and energetic; and though he has made an improvement in the drama by more diligence in presenting *single* pic-

tures (especially in the catastrophes) to the eye, and banishing from the stage the character of the confidante; yet his tragedies do not present a *series* of *more* pictures, nor, in other words, display more *action*, than others have done. On the contrary, the French poets, whom the present treatise mentions as deficient in it, have, I believe, upon the whole, discovered more: and this I attribute to the advantage they had, of a permanent theatre; and which the Count had not to assist him.

Since my Letters on the Drama were published, it occurred to me, that an increase of the action must necessarily be attended by an increase in the number of scenes. For though action is produced by various means during the course of a scene, this method cannot singly be relied upon. I now find this to be the only way Voltaire has increased the action of his tragedies; whose scenes I was surprised to find perhaps less numerous than Racine's, in his best plays: though he has properly applied himself to the easier method of producing effect by more broken speeches. But a tragedy has seldom, however, had its full complement of *plot*. I thought however, there was no doubt, from the characte

of them in this letter, that I should find it in the Count's tragedies; the scenes of which, as well as of all the principal ones existing, I had the curiosity to calculate; and can mention nearly what they were. The Œdipus Tyrannus of Sophocles has about twenty. Samson Agonistes somewhat fewer. Corneille's best plays hardly amount to thirty scenes. Those of Voltaire, Racine, and Crebillon have between thirty and forty; but I think the two latter of these contain the greatest number. Elfrida has somewhere about twenty; but Caractacus has as many as the latter French tragedies. Though I have not seen this play acted, I should think its not being sometimes well received must be owing to two circumstances. First, its songs, like those of Elfrida, and the Greek plays, are much too long to please upon the English stage. Though songs are every day found rather to increase than diminish dramatic effect, yet being prolonged, they must displease, after a time, just in the proportion they were able to strike at first. I have found nothing in the Battle of Eddington unacceptable to *an audience*, except the length of the choruses; but though this was only when the

music was confined to a single harp upon the stage, or a common country band; and though they are beyond comparison shorter than those I have mentioned, yet were any alteration necessary for stage effect, it would be to curtail them. Secondly, as a means of disposing of so much song, part of the odes is recited. When I first observed this, after having remarked the dislike of the audience for any thing it was not used to, I could not help wondering that this play ever succeeded. But were the songs to be only in part sung, (as, for instance, suppose the song beginning at "Hark! heard ye not," &c. were to have all omitted except the first, second, and last stanzas, which might be connected by altering a few letters, and putting the word "Haste," instead of "No," at the beginning of the last) and were the speeches only a little broken, it might be far from unacceptable. For, indeed, in violating the unity of place on our stage, we have not communicated much more action to our plays. Had that been done, it would have interested sufficiently without any departure from that rule. The favourite plays of Rowe and Otway do not contain many more scenes than the French plays;

and in but a few of the popular ones does the number approach fifty. I am not here speaking of old or historical plays, which may be so long, as that the scenes, however numerous, may be too expanded to increase the action: but I speak merely of plays of an ordinary length, containing fifteen hundred lines, more or less.

The scenes in the Count's plays never amount to so many as those in Corneille's; and in general they are in number about the same as those in Elfrida. The Count, in his description, in answer to this letter, of the sort of tragedy he aimed at writing, says, it was rapid as far as could consist with the display of the passions; for this necessarily required some pause in the action. But an elegant writer, in particular, is apt to mistake his sublime and harmonious dialogue, for that more dramatic style of writing, which is alone in place in a tragedy. There should be sufficient pauses to produce this desired effect; but there is no danger that it should be otherwise. The fear is rather, that opportunity should be given for useless discourse, however well expressed. We do not certainly want for an authority to recommend dramas,

as dramas, which prefer thoughts to words: Aristotle has gone at least as far as critics would do now-a-days in this preference, when he affirms the fable to be the principal consideration in a tragedy. And perhaps, indeed, from the use, if not the dignity of action, it is in tragedy, what Demosthenes is reported to have said it was in oratory; not only the first, but the second, and the third quality.

Nor is it of much less use in comedy; only here the plot ought to thicken, as it were casually, and without any forethought in the characters: for it seems that neither deep contrivance, nor villainy, ought to have place in it, without an adjunct of manners so striking, as to put them almost out of view. Mr. Murphy's play of "All in the Wrong," which, excepting in the last act or two, is an extremely pleasing comedy, is said in the Biographia Dramatica, to be one of our busiest plays; but I think it an excellent instance of this comic action. The incidents of it, by no means arising from design in the characters, arise, on the contrary, in spite of it, and by mistake. The same may be said of Moliere's short play from which it is taken. For, as Dr.

Hurd justly observes, balconies and ladders are not properly introduced (at least in the way supposed) in comedy. Portraits, letters, and the furniture of a room, however, are much more closely allied to manners; and, a *series of comic pictures*, such as those of Hogarth, for instance, though numerous, might not displease, especially if rendered distinct by adherence to the unities.

By such a mode of writing, all might be content to have the spirit of farce banished from genteel comedy; as critics have wished it should be. What would ever recommend it, would be its powerful assistance in amusing every rank; especially the lowest. And if this could not be otherwise done, there might be an excuse for resorting to it, if we reflect upon the reason for making, of the drama, a separate species of composition: this seems to be the nature of society; which uniformly, in every country, proves the call there is for this sort of entertainment, collecting men of all orders in the state, as its spectators. Unless, therefore, an equal effort be made to please all, the drama hardly appears in character.

Voltaire boasts of the difficulty, which he himself

and the other French poets had surmounted, of filling tragedies of the usual length with incidents, and yet being circumscribed, in their means, by the unities. But when there is so much additional action, that the scenes amount in number to between sixty and seventy, this particular difficulty is almost doubled.

Page 42.—*Every play in your first volume*] These plays are among those numerous ones, which, agreeably to the precept of Aristotle, and the practice, in consequence, of many poets, end unhappily. But, if the propriety of this be philosophically considered, it may be found that those which end happily, may strike exactly as much as the others, previous to the catastrophe, but that they superadd another pleasure, viz. that of having the mind set at ease, and its ease rendered delightful, in proportion to its former pain. Nor is it clear, that the moral effect is thereby weakened. But as I think Mr. Pye has made a real dramatic discovery by consulting the feelings of an audience, in this respect, instead of acquiescing in positive rules, I shall refer the reader to the note, at the 259th page of his Commentaries; part of which expresses so

fully my ideas upon the subject, that I need add no more.

Page 47.—*Strikes the eyes of the spectators*] The catastrophe very properly, and with great effect, at the end of the play, brings the dying persons upon the stage; but part of it is previously related at large; which was some deviation from the author's usual mode.

Page 64.—*To feed with horrid delight*] If it be a fault for a tragedy to end unhappily, the aggravating nature of this proposed conclusion would increase that fault.

Page 64.—*By the example of Shakspeare*] Crebillon, rather than Shakspeare, has been thought the poet of horror.

Page 70.—*The appellation of figurative*] As the critic has used, in one of the preceding notes, the expression of *painter-poet*, in finding fault with Boileau, I am induced to warn the reader to keep two principles separate.—The picturesque style he is here speaking of, is a truly admirable one; but it is necessary not to confound this with the *dramatic picturesque*, which has to do simply with the outward senses; which is comprehended equally by

the learned and the illiterate; and which this treatise has much merit in unfolding. He seems to have been led by the resemblance of the two qualities, to rank them under one head: though had he only enforced his advice concerning style, by another precept of Horace, he would have placed his general doctrine in a still clearer light; since he would have kept it more in view. Care certainly should be taken to steer as free as possible from defects in style; but upon the whole, in this respect, the following passage may tell us, what is more immediately necessary:

—— Cui lecta potenter erit *res*,
Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo.

He who his *subject* happily can choose,
Wins to his favour the benignant Muse;
The aid of eloquence he ne'er shall lack,
And order shall dispose and clear his track.

COLMAN.

This I conceive to be a precept no less useful, than that which is virtually one, and which I have mentioned as the most useful definition of tragedy. The merit of it, in *teaching* dramatic style, arises from its drawing the attention *from* style, and fixing

it upon subject. The essay and notes have dwelt so long upon this main principle of the critic, that I shall say no more of it, except in producing an instance to prove, that the introduction of a chorus may contribute to this dramatic picturesque. Having some idea of publishing my play with prints, the subjects of which might have proved acceptable to the lover of his country, I requested Mr. Smirke, with this view, to give me his opinion. As the latter parts of *every* tragedy have greater animation, I expected one would have been recommended from those parts of mine; but I found he chose one, in preference, from the first act, and it is the eleventh scene of that act;—the cottager being represented kneeling. A very important part of the group must be the chorus.

But the picturesque style the critic treats of in this passage, is not what he discovers originality in pointing out; it having frequently before been spoken of with praise. Algarotti and Winkelmann, prejudiced either by the love of antiquity or system, hardly allow the talents proper for this style to our unclassical latitude. Winkelmann thinks that the sublimity of Milton, is more owing to his

filling the ear, than presenting pictures to the mind. This opinion is so evidently founded in error, that, rather than attempt to disprove it, I shall only take occasion to remark, that as poetry in a manner unites the effects of painting and music, there may be a danger least, in imitating the Greeks too closely, in one respect, we should deviate too far from their practice in another. Their harmonious language too, ought especially to warn us, not to think allowable an harsh, incorrect versification; but to make the least possible sacrifices of melody. If Pope may have missed one or two opportunities of shining as a painter, he has surely made ample amends, by never failing to delight as a musician.

Page 75.—*In the style of Dante.*] I do not dispute his reasoning:—in Gray's Memoirs is likewise a sort of controversy on the subject of dramatic style. When the demands of an audience, and in consequence the nature of a *really* just drama, are by experience thoroughly known, it will then be for such masters of style as Gray to be more exclusively consulted in dramatic matters. Critics much inferior have often made remarks upo

the mode of writing proper to please an audience. They have thought the lines must be of unequal lengths, and harmony avoided in the same degree as the unities are violated; and the poetical second person singular, and the familiar second person plural, in verbs, seem both to have their partizans. But when objections are made, founded upon such opinions, I am convinced they will be soon, to all intents and purposes, silenced, merely by infusing fresh action into the piece.

Page 77.—*An evident proof of the great consequence*] I do not know how well, upon examination, this will agree with the inattention he observed, page 17, to every thing, except the airs. To judge from what we know, it might be that declamation which he observes, page 15, Apostolo Zeno had introduced, in imitation of the French. Metastasio's airs likewise might produce a greater musical effect.

Page 77.—*Charm alike painters, &c.*] May not this be, especially in ignorant minds, in a great measure owing to the subject?

When the Battle of Eddington first came out, it was received by the Monthly Reviewers in the

manner I have mentioned in my Letters on the Drama. Till some time after that period, I was ignorant of the *degree* of calmness with which they gave their opinion, but having then perused many of their criticisms on the drama, and finding them sincere advocates for dramatic irregularity, in more points than any persons I had met with, possessed of learning; I thought the advantage resulting to literature from the discussion which opposite opinions might call forth, would render it worth my while to take the same notice of them, as they had done of me. They are the critics, of all others, who are entitled, for the public good, to take up the gauntlet which I threw down; and if they can succeed, with every weapon of learning, I shall not repine at an issue of the contest, from which public benefit is to be derived. I will therefore explain the nature of that enterprize they may perhaps choose to undertake.

As this play was the only attempt, in the first edition, to render the introduction of theatrical music uniformly rational; so it was the only one, in the second, by increased action, to supply the want of variety constantly perceived in

plays of a more regular cast. Critics, for want of this offal of action, to appease the many-headed terror in the gallery, have seemed awed into a forgetfulness of their own natural sensations, and induced to think that propriety and correctness were not of themselves agreeable to the spectator or reader, but useless restraints, which it was adviseable for the poet to shake off. I made, therefore, the experiment which was thus untried, and found it succeed far beyond expectation. How demonstrable my success was, the letters published soon after sufficiently shewed.

Yet since that, a critic who professed himself willing to recommend the play, mentioned at the same time nothing favourable of it, as a composition. In spite of the difficulty of an attempt to write at once for the *most* ignorant and the *most* learned, and in spite of my apology for the consequence, he has remarked only the faults of its style. His criticism has been similar of the Essay, though merely letters; and when one considers that it is not only replete with close reasoning, but wholly bent on developing a *new* system, one may perhaps smile

at the aptness with which those lines of Pope might be quoted:

> Others for language *all* their care express——
> Their praise is still—the *style* is excellent:
> The *sense*, they humbly take upon content.

It will therefore better become me now, than it would have done before, to mention in what particulars this tragedy has any claim to praise. As a national play, it may be said of it, that among the poetical works intended to celebrate Alfred as the legislator of England, none have taken advantage of the friendly disposition of the sister kingdom towards us, at that time; though it has by no means, since, constantly increased. The same may be said of Wales and Scotland. This remarkable concurrence, therefore, of circumstances had not yet struck any writer. The subjects of the choruses fall in with this general plan. The first is in praise of attachment to our country, and to its laws; the second is in praise of Wales in particular; the third of Ireland; the fourth of Scotland; and the last of England, and the British empire. As a play, observant of the rules of criticism, it may be said of

it, that besides adapting much more business than the French writers do to all the laws of their drama, it obviates the objections made to them, by contributing to prove, that they do not necessarily occasion the faults observed. It has been said, that because the place ought always to be suited to the succession of actions in a tragedy, that therefore one place is improper for them all; and instances have been adduced of the impropriety of certain scenes on this account, when compared with those preceding them. But in the Battle of Eddington, there is a particular reason (which was not necessary) for the place even of the first scene; as it is represented a strong post, in which the only house near stood, and which was necessary to be carried. The queen comes to the spot unavoidably, as a place of shelter. Ceoluph and Alfred afterwards naturally come to a place so marked, according to appointment. I pass over, as obvious, the reasons for the intermediate entrances, and proceed to that of Mervin; who may easily be supposed detached by Alfred for the security of the queen, while he himself is pressing the enemy. Afterwards uncertainty concerning her induces him, when the vic-

tory is gained, to hasten to the spot. The reason why Ceoluph enters is, that being wounded, he is brought to a house so near, in preference to being detained in the open air, and on the ground; but just as they are entering, he finds his wound too painful to move farther. What faults in other respects may be perceived, I take upon myself as the *poet*, and by no means allow they are naturally attached to the *poetry*. I have exhibited in the present publication a new sort of demonstrative proof, *in poetry* (no less than absolute arithmetical proof), that a work may at least be curious, and worthy the attention of the learned, from its novelty. It is now quite impossible that this should escape those who wish to recommend mine both in deed and words; and who really approve of its sentiments. The difference between this and all former ones of the sort, as it consists in the much greater number of its scenes, is to be proved *by calculation*.

Since there is a circumstance so remarkable as this to attract attention, I confess I flatter myself that the public will think it fair to suspend its judgment, and not allow that the splenetic decision of any periodical critic shall have determined the just value

of this proposed improvement, till it has been well and generally considered. Perhaps, too, those who profess themselves of the Aristotelian, or those who are either of the Johnsonian, or more than Johnsonian school (among which last are the Monthly Reviewers), may have made up their minds so perfectly to their respective systems, that they will find it difficult, for that very reason, to conceive such an improvement. I therefore rely more upon the rising generation for that credit which it claims. After he has acquired a just relish for the classics, and approved of the simplicity of the Greek poets, as well as the remark of Horace concerning the

—— oculis subjecta fidelibus;

The deed submitted to the public eye; COLMAN.

the young scholar will find, upon more commerce with the world, that so far from having their precepts any longer at variance with the practice of the theatre, those authors, in some way or other, teach every *general* rule necessary to interest an audience. This must have an influence on his taste, as it must likewise tend to increase the respect paid to learning.

He will clearly understand the nature of this sort of drama, and perceive that no development

of character, nor display of pathos, or even eloquence, is prevented by it; only the trouble is saved to managers of cutting out unnecessary speeches; which practice has done more honour to their judgments than any thing else. He will see neither the meagreness of the French, nor the grossness of the English play: a grossness acquired by the violation of laws. He will confess some obscurity must still hang about that regularly irregular form of play, recommended by Johnson and Lord Kaims (such as the Mourning Bride), when compared with this now under consideration; an instance of which may be the Œdipus of Sophocles; and when the whole action is not supposed to take up above two or three hours, he will find the story unfolded with a more brilliant perspicuity. He will think it by no means wonderful, that the chorus introduced carelessly as such, by Mr. Mason, should revolt on the stage, while decried from prejudice against the ancients: that it should afterwards appear there (first in the plays either of Mr. Colman, or some other person who may claim that honour), its character judiciously estimated, but its name and country unknown to its introducer, and vehemently

and prudently disavowed from that ignorance: and finally, that its powers of pleasing having been proved, it should, on that account, be now introduced the second time without disguise, and be well received. He may, however, permit to poets, who do not wish dramatic laws relaxed, merely because they dislike to obey them, not to attempt to guide others, but to reject, themselves, every kind of restraint that cramps their genius. He may even think it adviseable that the reins should be fully given to the taste of the gallery, and the poet obliged to accommodate himself to its wildness, if not its proper animation, should be hurried too fast to doze after the French manner.

I do not know whether the word *superficial* may be repeated, in criticising my system; but it would be more to the point, to remark any thing of that nature, if it overthrew my arguments. It is only necessary for me to *read* effects in their causes, and to discover knowledge enough to serve as the basis of my system. Besides observing that no fault of this sort has been yet specified, I shall only add, that it has never been objected to the mathematician, as such, that he was ill versed in ancient languages.

At a time when every opportunity for expressing political sentiments discovers, in the kingdom, an increased and increasing bias towards the French; when every instance of favour towards the arts, is esteemed in them, the mark of a *great people* and the *first nation in the world*; but the cultivation of them in us, meets frequently with disrespect as inconsistent with those more lucrative pursuits to which we are accustomed to confine ourselves, and which are thought to bear exclusively the stamp of good sense; I do not know how an attempt to improve *our* literature may be received. I acknowledge, indeed, that the great body of people, which, though too often awed to silence sometimes shews its old English spirit by coming forward, as it has done lately, to assist the country is not willing that we should be considered as mere Helots; but the noisy and the persuasive, though small, may prove a dangerous part of the community. At present it is too true, that the tendency of public opinion augurs ill, not only to literary efforts like these, but even to the balance of power; the real friend of which would desire, that political enthusiasm should be equal in the two countries.

shall not, however, be deterred by this from avowedly priding myself on my discovery, though it is daring to emulate French spirit in attention to general improvement. My presumption may, I own, be thought the greater, when it is considered that the French have valued themselves, above all things, on the extreme finish and correctness of their plots, and on this account spoken contemptuously of our unrivalled poet. But if it be found, that superadded to such correctness, increased action gives a due energy to the tragic drama, even in point of art they will not have attained the utmost degree of excellence; and future examples may, probably, prove my researches to have contributed to the dramatic triumphs of my country.

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